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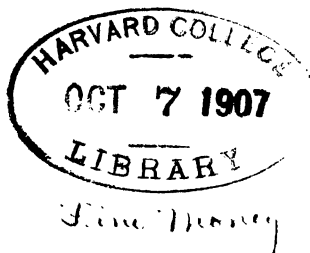
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THE NEW RELIGION
A MODERN NOVEL

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FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK.

FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEY ARE SICK.

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO LIVE LONGER THAN OTHER PEOPLE.

FOR NOBODY ELSE.

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CHAPTER I

THE silver evening sunshine lay on the silver lake.

Lucia Lomas stood by the water-side. Far away a swan moved, among the water-lilies. In the stillness, and hush of slowly approaching slumber, the copper-beech—Lucia's copper-beech—drooped motionless upon the sward its trails of changeful shadow. The swan, catching sight of the familiar, white-clad figure, came with swiftening ripples across the dull gleam of the water. And in the silence, suddenly, a crowd of speckled ducks arose from nowhere, quacking and spluttering, expectant, upon the flattened grass.

"No, Billy!" cried Lucia. And such authority was in her bright, young voice, that the great, bony-billed drake sullenly abandoned his endeavors to extract nourishment from the lace-flounce of her dinner-dress. She dropped bread to him, and to all the others, a fighting crowd. The swans ruffled their feathers in a restless semi-circle, and hissed.

"Take your turns!" said Lucia. "And your master and I, when he comes home, last of all!" Her thoughts lingered on the calm happiness of home, and the nightly home-coming as she flung her lumps of bread across the water. The ducks wallowed noisily backwards: the swans darted furiously at the bread and the lesser fowl. There sprang up a loud squeaking and screeching, of protest and pain.

"Socrates!" expostulated Lucia. She punished with propitiatory pellets the offending father-swan, who owed his appellation to no imagined virtues but, certainly, to the evil temper of

his consort and, possibly, to the possession of a single white garment, washed at home. "Next time you bite the ducklings I shall change your name," said Lucia. She gazed up into the bronzen glories of the copper-beech, vaguely speculating on the comforts of a home with a philosopher and the reputation, true or false, of Xantippe.

Against the furrowed stem, some six feet from the ground, securely fastened, hung a basket, and in that basket sat, heavy, despondent, the pet supreme, Rob, the white bull-dog, with the fierce hairy collar, and the kind pink eye. The kind pink eye was a delusion, the unchanging despondency a fact. What Rob wanted to do was to tumble from that basket, in a friendly way, right down among the ducks. But his mistress, loving him with an ancient and unflinching affection, yet loved honor more. She knew that, if you invite ducklings to supper, it is against the rules of etiquette to have a bull-dog to meet them. Rob's honest plea of playfulness cannot honestly be entertained for one moment: has not a yet older sage than Socrates warned us, that the play of one is the torment of another? The original reference may have been to a piano. Rob, hanging moist laps over the rim of his prison, reflected in his innocent, inquisitive dog-heart, that he had never murdered anything so precious as a sonata.

Could his gentle mistress declare as much—right paw on left breast—gaping back into her pigtail and pinafore youth? "I—I—" contended Rob, craning (pure benevolence!) after that creep-away creature right under the basket—"I—I never did anything worse in my life than snap at children's legs—unnecessarily naked, sausage-like children's legs!"

"That may be," Lucia answered his oft-repeated whine. Childless herself, in her girl-marriage, she loved even sausage-legs. Rob she had loved and cherished from the beginning—Rob's beginning: his slow eyes had oped on Lucia and love. But, at a glance from some nervous mother, at a snarl from Mary Corry's ill-natured black skipper, up, up went the bull-dog, a terrific weight, making himself most unaccommodatingly

heavier, out of harm's way. "Love me, leave my dog!" says Lucia. "No, darling: he doesn't care for candied orange-peel! I put him up here in this basket, you see, whenever I feed my ducks."

"Quack! Quack!" remarked the ducks. They approved of all Lucia's arrangements. Most sentient creatures about Beechlands did. For, of this young mistress of Beechlands it may be said, as of many a young and gracious womanhood, that her dreams were gladness, her thoughts were kindness, her deeds were love. Her daily course of unselfish duties left smiles and sighs—and grunts—of satisfaction upon her unconscious path. She was no better than half a dozen other women about her quiet country home. But she had received from an almost partial Providence one of those radiant brows—the lofty arches and the liquid eyes—that seem to touch with a sudden glow of sunshine the lightest action or the simplest word. Children told at home about the pretty lady who had smiled "Good day;" to them. Old men, nodding their chins over the penny avowedly bestowed "for baccy" watched her as she turned to call her dog. "A fine creature!" said the oldest inhabitant. Possibly he meant the dog.

The ducks, however, echoing the sentiment, intended no allusion to the poor, pinky-white monstrosity—"a disgrace to creation: only, he isn't creation but invention," said a beautiful green and blue drake. Poor Rob, a Second Prize that should have been a First ("but the judges, you know," etc.) the shapelessest, jelly-like mass with the loveliest Louis Quinze legs! He must have felt what the creatures were quacking to each other, for by an almost super-dogged effort he toppled himself over into their midst.

Then arose such a squealing and fluttering as no word of mere man can describe. But it all can be easily imagined by whoever has seen forty pounds of bull-dog descend from nowhere into a family of fowls. It was the utter unexpectedness which caused the wide exasperation. For a moment every flying, feathered biped felt that somebody wasn't "playing the game!"

Unfortunately for Rob not only ducks but also cygnets were mixed up in this cacophonous medley, and as the four-footed playmate, as much perturbed as anybody, went rolling down the slope, Granfer Swan arose, rampant upon the shore, with wings outspread and flappings resonant, prepared to do battle. Splendid he stood, ungainly but undaunted: behind him straddled, peeping, his fluffy brood. And the hapless "bull" tumbling forwards, as it seemed to himself, into a pandemonium of feathers, knocked up against the stroke of those strong white wings with a yelp and a yell.

Lucia, not one whit less courageous than Socrates, ran forward to protect her favorite. She swung her basket aloft: from under its last crumbs, leaped, unremembered, Maurice Maeterlinck and struck, with his "Vie des Abeilles," the philosopher full on the neck. That irate ancestor, fizzing like a syphon, stood his ground, before his family, even waddled ahead. Rob, turning, half under his mistress's gown, showed his teeth.

The ducks, all in the water, interested spectators and expressing their opinions with the greatest fluency, must have resented as a personal offence the appearance at this stage of a *deus ex machina*. This god who left his mowing-machine was old Busk, the head-gardener, grumpily content to chase the "quarrelsome crittur," inimical, like all gardeners, to what he termed "loose-feathered fowl."

He set down again, with an extra square jerk, full of his opinion, the iron chair he had hastily caught up and, eyeing the splashy philosopher:

"The nasty, quarrelsome crittur," he said.

"Why, Busk, he was only defending his babies." Lucia had gathered Rob to her bosom and was feeling all over his limpness—no easy operation—for broken bones.

"He didn't oughter have any," said Busk, surveying with evil eye the evil-eyed patriarch in the water. He added energetically: "But it's just like them loose-feathered fowl." Then, after the usual pause (he spoke in pauses—of thought, he would have said): "There oughtn't to be any of them about. Nor dogs."

"Oh, Busk! Only our noble selves?"

"And us, ma'am, if I may make so free," replied Busk with slight surprise.

"All this for man alone to enjoy!" exclaimed Lucia, sweeping a momentarily loosened hand over the expanse of calm water and smooth lawn, over the vague masses of color in the far back-ground, towards the low, brown house. The hand returned thoughtfully to the dog, who lay winking, in open content, wrong side up. Ah, the love of that low, brown house!

"Beasts is beasts," said Busk disapprovingly. "And us is us."

"I do not deny it," replied Lucia, whom long sympathy had taught how to converse with the gardener.

"And it's not for me to say that dogs don't enjoy gardens, ma'am," continued Busk, riled, "but I wish Them as made dogs and gardens—speaking reverent—had taught them some other way of doing it!" He turned to his work: a wicked gleam lightened up his eye. "And one of the Salisburies lying dead!" he said. He meant "Aylesburies," but he wilfully chose to "misremember" all names but those of his plants. He stopped to lift an object by the tree, half-hidden, dark-brown, crushed. Its bereaved relations, disconcerted by the sudden stoppage of supplies, were preening and fussing all round.

"Dead!" said Lucia sadly. She stood gaping at the inert little heap of fluff. The unintentional offender at her bosom pretended to be asleep. Nor did his mistress's feeble slaps disturb him. "Naughty!" she said. "He couldn't help it. He never fell out before."

"She's very fat," answered Timothy Busk. Lucia turned to pick up her "Vie des Abeilles."

"Please, ma'am, what's to be done with her?" That was the question of interest. Will she eat it? Perhaps not. There's no gauging the fancies of "The Quality." For Busk still spoke of "The Quality." A survival. The *word* was a survival: his estimate of them was as modern as could be.

"Oh, bury her of course."

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There was an eloquent silence, so weighty, that it caused Lucia to look round. The two gaped at each other.

"She's very fat," remarked Busk, feelingly, and feeling.

"It was the lame one," said Lucia.

"They often are the fattest," admitted Timothy.

"Oh, just do whatever you like with her!" exclaimed Lucia.

"Thank you, ma'am."

"Busk, I believe you're the most practical-minded person I ever came across."

"It's very good of you to say so, ma'am," replied the gratified Busk. He stood cramming the bulgy mass into his pea-jacket pocket. The duck's neck hung down, lengthened, her yellow beak askew.

"I pitied her," said Lucia pensively, "but she certainly was very greedy."

"Greed comes before a fall," opined Busk. "If she hadn't been so greedy, she'd maybe not have been so fat," he added unctuously, "No exercise, and your meals regular, like Sarah." Sarah was Busk's recently paralyzed wife, a sickness not unto death, a new experience, vaguely vexatious, to the hale old worker. "If ye eat and sleep, ye can't be ill," says Busk.

"What I like in *you*, Busk, is that you would have buried her, if I hadn't changed my mind."

"Ma'am!" answered Busk, with a vicious push of his mower. "The Quality changes their mind, and we takes it as it comes! As I often says to Sarah, the foll—fancies of the rich is the fates of the poor!" He eyed his machine askance: he wanted to finish this bit before sunset. But it is a rule with all who labor, old as labor itself, that, should a superior seek superfluous conversation, all work must be suspended (from respect) meanwhile.

"Ah!" spoke Lucia, with meditative admiration, more to herself than to the gardener, "who taught you such a truth, Busk, deep as the ocean, and wide as the world? Not me, I hope?" She looked at him a little anxiously.

The old man bridled. "I can think of things for myself,

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ma'am; I thank you," he answered. "Gardeners has rare opportunities for thinking. Watching how queer things grow."

"But the rich have their fates, too," said Lucia softly. "We potter about and peck, and scrape up all sorts of things, and suddenly—crash!" She spread out both her arms: the dog leaped from her lap.

Busk resumed his leisured mowing. And, as the distance widened between him and his mistress, he muttered with every slow tread of his heavy feet: "Rich—men's—fancies. Poor—men's—fates. Rich—men's—fancies——" The humble blades fell low: the starry blooms fell also.

Lucia sat gaping at the tranquil evening landscape: the dull lake, the sleeping water-fowl, the drowsy cattle dotted on the meadows beyond. She thrust down her empty hands. "And suddenly," she said, "crash!"

CHAPTER II

A SHRILL railway whistle broke, far away, through the thoughtful silence. "Master's train!" said the old man, pausing by the beech. Lucia roused herself to observe the familiar trail of smoke.

"Comel" she said to the dog, who wore that peculiar aspect of conscious wrong-doing, so rare in human beings, so frequent, and so painful, in brutes. "Comel" said Lucia, kindly. There was gratitude in every shamble of Rob's spindly feet.

"The gardenia's on the hall-table, ma'am," said Busk, in her wake. He wanted her to answer "I know it is:" he would not have objected to the grievance of her answering: "Is it?" The crotchety soul-life of the fine, old, crusted retainer can only be guessed at by those who are the envied possessors of this precious and costly "*article de vertu*."

"I know it is, Busk," said Lucia without stopping, drawn homewards by the whistle. The old man followed her, grating his mowing-machine in her ears. "I'll send Sarah another tin of beef-extract to-morrow," said Lucia. "She really does like it, doesn't she? She mustn't say so only to please me!" Busk grunted. "I do wish she were stronger," said Lucia.

The gnarled gardener gazed up at his mistress: his was a figure bent like an orchard-tree, immensely aged, but with crab-apples on his cheeks and grey moss all over him. "There's more that we wishes was stronger," he said. "Weh-hell!" That dissyllable, with its low rise and emphatic fall was Timothy Busk's conclusive compendium and epitome of a life-long philosophy: a query, an ergo, a Q.E.D. Through all his long garden-work he had pondered ceaselessly to reach that ultimate point

d'appui. When he turned a belated back on this world of weeds, St Peter (it is recorded) stopped him at the turn-stile with the question whither he was bent. Timothy, pausing, as was his custom, to reflect, concluded uncertainly and humbly: "Weh-hell, mister" and forthwith found himself in Paradise. It is doubtful whether the garden fully came up to his expectations. Judging by previous experiences we may fancy not. He had expected much. As he lay a-dying, his motionless sick wife beside him, he had asked her: "Did Doctor Rook say I couldn't live? Why don't you answer? I know he said so. Weh-hell, I shall know at last." He would know—thus ending a fifty years' philosophic torment—if flowers have souls, arbitrarily decisive that dogs have not.

But this brief chronicle begins not with Paradise, only with Beechlands: it cares little for Busk, who is but an adjunct to Lucia. It watches the latter with interest, as she toils up the green slope to the thatch-covered, creeper-hung, long, unpretentious house. The penitent Rob stumbled close against his lady's filmy skirt. "Ah, Rob-a-Dob-Dob!" She looked down at the pink and white lump of meekness and also, with womanly interest, at the much bedraggled skirt. "Love comes expensive!" she reflected, but the meaning of the words lay outside her placid life. At the sound of "Rob-a-Dob-Dob" the big bull-dog's appearance changed by magic, no less shapeless, but differently so, in assertive content. All was right in his world again. He grinned.

As for Lucia, she never said: "Rob-a-Dob"—and an extra "Dob" was worse—with an easy conscience. For thereby hangs a tiny tale. The grandest and goodest person that had ever swum within Lucia's ken was her great-uncle, the Dean. Once, when she was quite a tiny child, that overwhelming dignitary had offered to drive his grand-niece for a short distance in his barouche. In the timidest squeak she had pleaded for the companionship of her one-eyed nigger-doll. "You may take him," the splendid personage had answered, "if you will promise not to talk nonsense to him. Little children should never talk nonsense, not even to dolls!" They had started: at first all had

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gone well till, as the initial terror lessened, in the ecstasy of sunshine, soft cushions, prancing horses, Lucia had clasped her treasure to her bosom: "Georgie Porgie! Ride in coachie poachie!" The Dean pulled the check-string. The small child and her black nurseling stood alone in the wide road.

Lucia never said "Rob-a-Dob-Dob" without a guilty recollection of the great and good Dean.

She now reached the entrance-hall, as her husband's smart dog-cart came swiftly up the avenue. From the table she took the daily gardenia: gardenias, if you give your mind to them, are producible pretty nearly all the year round. And it was an understood thing that Henry Lomas lived in unremitting need of gardenias. For: "Is this your favorite flower?" young Lucia had questioned ten minutes after she had consented to marry him, laying a timid hand near his button-hole, and his heart. "Yes," he had replied in the delight of that sudden bewilderment, thereby settling his permanent flower-fate, for who could cry back, idiotically, on so tender a memory as this? So, though he detested the sickly perfume, and had merely bought the thing, haphazard, for unusual middle-age smartness, Henry Lomas had to wear, every evening, after city-work, a laboriously cultured gardenia amidst the sweet country scents of his home. Which shows him to have been a good deal gentler minded than the average of his selfish sex.

After all, there are worse predilections to tie one's self to, in a moment of aberration, than an uncongenial flower. Is there not, for instance, the jam roly-poly a fatuous suitor, a careful club-diner, somehow got himself mixed up with till the club-fed rebelled? As for favorite flowers, so many of us get the wrong one: the gorgeous Beaconsfield, for instance, wears through all time the yellow primrose, because the good Prince Consort liked the plant. Disraeli's favorite flower, as all know who care to know, was the peacock.

Lucia did not care to know, but, then, she was not a Primrose Dame, like her mother. Charity Organization, Cruelty to Children, etc., were more in her line.

Henry Lomas's favorite flower was Lucia. He had culled her, after careful selection, from the neat parterre, where she grew, properly tended, amongst the others, in his "set." Many of them would have been quite willing to be gathered for Henry Lomas to wear upon his breast. True, he was past fifty—just past—but he was a well-preserved, pleasant-faced man to look at, with a florid complexion, clear eyes, and a fair, closely trimmed beard. He had kept his bright hair and his square-shouldered figure, and he dressed well, in dark greys, and a good tie. And, also he was well off, if not wealthy, the manager of a family-bank in which half his relations, and a certain number of well-connected connections held shares.

"Worried?" said Lucia.

"No. Why?" He kissed her. And, then, slowly, as an afterthought, he kissed her again.

"I fancied you looked worried."

"I was only thinking. No—of you, dear—the last moment. Thinking how nice you looked, as I came up the drive."

"Don't be silly, Henry. It wasn't business?"

"No—well, yes. I had been thinking of business, and also of you!" He took the gardenia. "There's no putting you off, Lucia. I wonder how many other city-wives care so much about their husband's office-work? The business is all right, first-rate. Still, business is business: it isn't exactly——"

"What?"

"Pleasure! Yes, it is so. By George, what made me say such a stupid thing as that? I know no greater. Except coming away to you down here!"

"You would miss it certainly," said Lucia.

"Miss it? I should think so. I should feel dead-alive without the office. How do, Rob? What have you been doing with your fat self all day?" Rob winked to his mistress to lead the conversation away from him.

"When you're old," said Lucia, "you'll stay among the flowers with lazy Rob and me, and we will read you naughty French novels and pick you roses."

As for Rob's share in the reading, what would the worthy Dean have said to that? The plucking of roses, however, by a sharp bite, among the bushes, or protestfully held-up, a limp mass, against the standards, was indeed a laboriously imparted accomplishment of the bull-dog's, who was supposed thereby to save his mistress an infinity of trouble (after she had first scratched her fingers over the removal of every thorn in the neighborhood) by presenting the blooms, the stem clutched securely between his prominent teeth.

"Don't," said Lomas, walking away to the staircase. "I shall go to the office for many a long day yet." Her heart smote her for the allusion, however vague, to the difference of age, nearly thirty years, between them. She knew how silently sensitive he remained on that subject. She leant against the balusters, dizzy, with this recent, unaccountable dizziness, steadying herself.

"I was prophesying for the far, far future!" she said cheerfully. "Busk's wife doesn't seem much stronger. I looked in on her this afternoon. Don't you think their cottage wants a coat of paint?"

"No. It was done eighteen months ago. But it can be done again, if you wish." He stopped, laughing, on the landing. "Is there a stain on it anywhere?" he asked, "the size of a saucer?"

"Oh, no, quite a soup-plate," replied Lucia humbly. "And Susan's husband is out of work again, Henry."

"Aha: I thought that was it. Well, we'll put up a hoarding somewhere in a field, and Susan's husband can paint that as often as she likes."

"Oh, that would hurt his feelings!" cried Lucia.

"He paints very badly, Lucia."

"She's going to have another child," said Lucia.

"There's no answering that argument. He must paint the whole front of the house any color he pleases. Or perhaps you might suggest purple; then it would probably come out brown."

"You always laugh at me," protested Lucia.

He bent over the stair-rail, the stupid, downright man, saying

the very thing he was ever anxious to avoid: "Not always. Only when I feel fatherly."

She smiled up at him, seeking for something quite nice to reply, and wisely silent—oh, wise woman!—not finding it. "The band-people have been here, from the village," she struck off. "They wanted their contribution——"

"Raised," popped in Lomas.

She laughed aloud. "*I* could have guessed that. Or even Rob."

"And you saw them. So they got it raised."

She hung her head. "You'd have raised it, too."

"Very likely. But I shouldn't have doubled it."

She cried aloud, in sheer glee. "I didn't! I said we'd give them half as much again. Oh, you *would* have doubled it. A woman always manages such things better than a man."

"It's high time for me to dress for dinner," said Lomas. But at his door he called to her, with some hesitation.

"Lucia!"

"Yes?"

"That fool, Corry—oh, I know he's the most sensible fellow we know, only he says things one doesn't want to hear—he's got an idea into his head that you're looking ill. You don't look ill?"

"Oh, no," said Lucia quickly.

"He says you ought to see a doctor. I told him we never had anything to do with doctors. Except for the poor."

"I don't believe in doctors," said Lucia.

"One doesn't until one needs them. If you felt ill, you would tell me, wouldn't you? At once?"

There was a pause. Rather a long pause. "Yes," said Lucia.

CHAPTER III

FATHERLY! Fatherly! Well, mind you, Henry Lomas had actually been Lucia's father's friend. Not the right father's, true!—for Lucia had possessed two contemporaneous fathers, though she had only been personally acquainted with the wrong one, so to speak. In other words Lucia's mother had been twice married—nay, thrice, if we are to be all-comprehensive; the first husband had died without offspring; from the second, Lucia's father, the lady had obtained a divorce; the third, Lucia's step-parent had, like the first, departed this life, childless. These three husbands Mrs Blandrey, still a good-looking widow of seven and forty, used to distinguish with characteristically illogical appositeness as Number One, Number Nought, and Number Three. To Number Nought, after all, she owed her motherhood: to Number One she had been married by her parents at eighteen.

"And really we were beginning to get on capitally," she would say in later years. "It was such a pity he died! Dear me, Lucia, if Harry hadn't died, I should have been spared an immense deal of trouble."

"Yes, mamma."

"But it would have been a very great disappointment for you."

"That depends, mamma." Lucia, as she said this, dipped her brush into the water and suddenly turned it blood-red.

"Don't be misanthropic, Lucia! Misanthropy's absurd in a young person with her life all before her! As it is in an old person with her life all behind! My grandmother Forditch, who lived to be ninety-three, and would have lived to be older

if she hadn't died—you know what I mean—used to say she'd begin all over again that moment, even if she had to marry grandfather Forditch just the same."

"How can people care," said young Lucia, "if they die to-morrow or the day after?"

"It makes a deal of difference," replied her mother, counting stitches, "as you'll find when to-morrow comes. My poor Harry was twenty-three, when he half emptied that water-jug off our wash-stand at Taormina. I can see the thing now: it has a hideous pattern, blue roses on a pink ground. Well, it killed him—on our honey-moon. One never quite forgets a thing like that."

"I suppose not," said Lucia, painting her sky grey.

"I have never been able to endure the combination since. Besides, the two colors don't go well together. Take those Caroline Testout roses out of the Delft vase, Lucia. It was your putting them in made me think of my poor Harry."

Lucia never opposed her mother but under the strongest compulsion.

"And poor Harry's death naturally recalls your father," continued Mrs Blandrey in an offended tone. "There is such a close connection between the two."

"Don't let us speak," said Lucia, in a troubled voice, "of my father."

"Why, what can you care, child!" demanded her mother, amazed. "If you met him to-morrow, you wouldn't know him from Adam!"

"True," said Lucia, more troubled still, "but you remember your agreement with—with my father, mamma."

"Thank you, Lucia—yes. Though it is hardly for my child to remind me of it. But if you want me not to mention your father, you must not put Caroline Testout roses in a blue Delft vase."

A silence followed. Mrs Blandrey counted in an undertone. She had a taste for mathematical fancy-work, the sort which seems to consist in immeasurable computations at what distance you must plant the next stitch.

"It was an absurd proposal of your father's," resumed Mrs. Blandrey, drawing the thread through its lone hole, "to abandon you to my care on the express condition of my never mentioning his name. But he was unreasonable. I dare say he is still. Now, poor Harry always seemed to me so reasonable—the little I saw of him!—except in dying just before he came into the money I married him for, poor dear!"

She laughed softly, and put up a shapely hand to the fair curls over her brow.

"And poor papa was always very good to you, Lucia," she added, "you have never missed a father's care."

"Poor papa" was Number Three, Mr Blandrey. Lucia, an infant of five, had refused with incipient tears to call him "father." There would have been a little scene, had Mrs Blandrey not avoided scenes. But she only said, with an uncomfortable laugh, "Very well, child, then you will have to call me 'mamma.' "

"Oh, no, mother."

"Yes, you will. We can't let strangers into these little sentimental secrets of ours."

"I see," said the child Lucia thoughtfully. She had never beheld a portrait of her father. She could hardly have explained what she dimly felt. But she stuck to her vague distinction from that hour.

"It is ten years now since poor papa died. I was nine at the time."

"Thirty-seven," said her mother, busy with the stitches. "I wish you would not be so precise, Lucia: you know how I dislike dates. And yet it does seem extraordinary that I should be such a young woman still with two husbands in the grave" (she shuddered slightly), "and the third I haven't the faintest conception where! But your step-father was really good to you, Lucia. He would have ruined your teeth if I had let him. Not that you greatly cared for sweets! You know you were sorry, when poor Ted died, though now you say you were only nine. Why, I believe you were almost as sorry as I was."

"I was sorry," said Lucia, painting. "Papa was always very kind to me. I liked him."

"Indeed, you did. More, I sometimes fancied, than you did me."

"Oh, no, mamma. I liked you more."

"Liked! Liked! You talk as if he were marmalade! And I were jam!" Lucia left her water-color and put an affectionate arm round her mother's neck.

"I dislike marmalade," she said, laughing, "and I don't enthuse over jam."

"Well, you may enthuse over me, child, but you mustn't kiss me. Dupajoux expressly warned me against letting myself be kissed the first hour after I'd put it on. After that, it's all right. Do you think it shows?"

"You look lovely. You always do, but I think you look quite as lovely without."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Blandrey, in earnest doubt. "I think I was going sallow, though I had given up *fritures*. I never gave up anything before, nor had an ache or a pain, and I'm forty-se— Never mind. It is a dreadful thing, Lucia, to grow old and obese! Oh, for mercy's sake, child"—she turned pale under her enamel—"you don't think I shall ever grow obese?"

"No," said Lucia.

"But have you good reason for saying so?"

"Yes," said Lucia. "Why, mamma, surely all the rich things you've eaten for the last twenty-five years would have fattened you, if you'd had it in you to grow stout."

"Not twenty-five years, Lucia. I do wish you'd leave my dates alone. And you talk of me as if I were a prize pig."

"I didn't intend to," said Lucia humbly.

"I believe you grudge me my little French dinners instead of thanking me for having brought you up on mutton and rice! Why, you ought to bless me on your bended knees, ungrateful girl! You can have French dinners, when you're married, as you ought to have been long ago. But you owe it to me—me—to my *sleepless* care, if you've as good a figure as I had, and nearly as good a

complexion, and better teeth! No thanks to Ted for the teeth! Teeth are very important." Mrs. Blandrey cast a side-glance at her own in the glass. "Immensely important. But there is always a last, desperate resource."

Lucia had resumed her seat. "Do you really want me to marry?" she said. "I am only nineteen."

"My dear innocent, all I can say is, had I waited till I was nineteen, I should just have missed Harry. My life would have been the poorer for a very interesting and touching memory." She took up her work. "Dear fellow!" she said. "He was dead when I was nineteen. He had great expectations. They were all drowned in a one and elevenpenny pink and blue jug."

Lucia carefully drew a hair out of her brush.

"As for marrying," continued Mrs. Blandrey, "it's a thing that nobody, not even one's mother, can advise about. All a mother can do for her daughter is to make her as attractive as she can, so that her future husband may possibly fall in love with her. And *strong*. Not one husband in a thousand can stand a sick wife. If you're not as strong as I, Lucia, that's your father's fault. His health is bad, and he comes of a decadent, introspective family. A month after our marriage I came upon him looking at his tongue in the glass. It quite upset me. I felt at once I could never respect a man who did that."

"But he used to have such dreadful headaches—did he not?" Lucia spoke unwillingly.

"You have never been ill, all the same, thanks to me," replied her mother, "except an occasional chill and that scarlet fever, two years ago. You've got over that, I think, Lucia?" She looked anxiously at her daughter.

"Oh, yes, I've got over that," said Lucia.

"The doctors said you would. Not that I believe in doctors or know anything about them or ever cared, or had need, to consult one. Hygiene's my creed; care of your body; tubs and porridge and a first-rate hair and skin man. I know nobody to equal Dupajoux. You can kiss me now, Lucia. And I haven't neglected your intellect either. You can paint well enough to amuse

yourself (as I could) and play well enough to keep you from performing before other people, and you've learnt all the dates of the wars of the ancient Romans, and I trust you've forgotten them!"

"Cannae was 216 B.C.," said Lucia, laughing. "And Thrasy-
menus—— I forget when Thrasy-
menus was."

Mrs. Blandrey lifted her hands to her ears. "Forget!" she cried. "Forget! Imagine what a bore it would be to any husband to find he had married a woman who knew about Thrasy—
what?"

"Then why do we learn them?" protested Lucia.

"So as to be able to say we have forgotten. It would be unpardonably illiterate to not be able to say that."

"I will remember to forget," said Lucia.

"That's a good child. You always were a good child, and amenable, except when you tormented me about keeping 'Jack' after he had got the mange. You must admit I was right in *insisting* he should go."

"I was a child. It seemed so cruel to think he should be killed."

"You are a child still, in many ways: in some, of course, a woman. And that is the right age to marry at, Lucia. If we wait till we are all woman, we—we are likely not to marry at all."

"Well," said Lucia, "I'm not anxious to marry—like some girls. And I'm only nineteen."

"Lucia, this is terrible! I never heard you say anything so foolish before! Not marry!"

"Not anxious to marry, mamma."

"A spinster!" cried Mrs. Blandrey excitedly, losing count. "My daughter a spinster! A cranky, dowdy spinster! An old maid with ideas! Like your poor silly, foolish, ridiculous Aunt Monck!"

Lucia, who was much attached to her father's sister, here observed a customary reticence.

"My daughter like Ermentrude Monck! Would you keep cats, Lucia? You can't want to be a spinster and not care for cats."

"Aunt Ermentrude hasn't got a cat," said Lucia.

"And I dare say she didn't want to be a spinster!" replied

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Mrs. Blandrey triumphantly. "I dare say her name stood as much in her way as anything. Few men would care to marry a plain woman called Ermentrude." She stuck her needle excitedly into the wrong hole. "You don't really mean what you say, Lucia! You can't really mean what you say?"

"I don't mean to say anything," replied Lucia. "Only that, honestly, as regards marrying, I don't *want* to *want*."

"You will want, if you don't," answered Mrs. Blandrey tartly. And her wit put her into a good humor at once.

Small as the wit was, the veracity of the remark was yet smaller. Of all conceptions there is none more relative than privation—still! Let it be granted that Mrs. Blandrey's idea of necessary expenditure included all expenditure which came her way. In reason. Extravagance was whatever other people did, if they couldn't pay for it. Her own reasonable right was to travel through life first-class, not in saloon-carriages or special trains, but first-class all the way. She was quite willing to give generous tips along the line. And she consented graciously to have windows opened or closed, as her fellow-travelers preferred, and lent anything she didn't happen to be using, while retaining her own comfortable seat. As for the terminus, whatever is the use of thinking of that till you have reached it? Certainly, she would feel annoyed if, on alighting, she found only the general omnibus to take her home. She had never affected vulgar free-thinking talk of any kind; she had always been civil to the Church; she could not imagine that anything connected with that institution would be discourteous to her in the end.

She had not married "Number One"—the typhoid-slain Harry—for his chance of coming money though she might lightly put it so; she had married him, because her parents advised her to. And she had honestly regretted him far more than his prospective wealth. Lucia's father, Lucius Monck, she had more probably beheld through the golden haze of his considerable fortune; she had divorced him, as she always avowed, "from pique." "My vanity was offended," she admitted chary, as a rule of confession, but not

unwilling to talk, among intimates, against herself. "Of course I had the law on my side, but that counts for nothing in these cases. The law's a fluke!" In divorcing from the man she had also willingly separated from his fortune, although she realized the full import with all the distinctness obtainable from a father's expletives and a mother's tears. She went even further, a great deal further, and rejected the alimony allowed her by the Court. "The Court!" she cried, splendidly scornful. "The whole thing's a disgusting fluke!" She smiled. "But I've had my own way, and I'm not going to cry any more"—she was barely twenty-three—"there's nothing so bad for the looks. But I don't want his stupid money." When her baby was born, she called it Lucia.

Two years later she married Ted Blandrey, whom she had known and liked, as a friend, all her life. "Because it's so dull playing alone with Baby," she said. "And, besides, it's a shame that Baby shouldn't have somebody to say 'Dad' to." When Ted Blandrey died, she discovered that his fifteen hundred a year was an annuity. "Well?" she said, "he left me all he could. I couldn't expect him to leave me what he took away." With the money he *had* left—about two thousand pounds—she did the most astonishing, incredible thing—the sort of thing you can't believe possible—but she did it! She deposited Lucia with the child's grandmother (one of four), and she herself traveled straight, without a break, in her widow's weeds, to the Riviera. She staked the maximum at the first *trente et quarante* table on the left, the morning after her arrival at Monte Carlo. She didn't know the rules of the game and was stupefied by the first "refait." She won eight thousand pounds in a fortnight, and she doubled, and ultimately trebled, that amount by frantic and utterly foolish speculations on the London Stock Exchange. "I knew it," she said, "I had been unlucky in marriage. I knew I should be lucky at play." She politely refused to touch the big cheques Monck's solicitor paid into her bankers. Then her father died and she was left very comfortably off.

"I'm all right," she said, "I've had three husbands and now I'm a young widow, and there isn't a thing in my life that anybody

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may not look right down into. Whatever you do, Lucia, don't be fast. I loathe fastness. Promise me, for one thing, that you will never allow yourself to be tempted by *anything* to call any man not your husband or cousin by his Christian name!"

The youthful Lucia promised. Mrs. Blandrey gave a sigh of relief. "That is far more far-reaching than you imagine!" she said. "First cousin, mind!"

Lucia, young, but not devoid of mischief, murmured something about "servants."

"The servants! I was speaking of men. Now, that sounds a hideous thing to say, but the fault is yours. And I hate to feel unkind about the lower classes. Well, yes, as I was saying, I am just a page of white paper. Everybody can unfold me. And that is how every woman ought to be. The *femme incomprise* is almost always the *femme compromise* and I detest them both."

"Oh, no, I cannot marry you," she said to Henry Lomas, when that gentleman first hovered round the subject. "Not four! That would be ludicrous. I assure you three is on the verge. I felt that when poor Ted lay dying. I couldn't again, at least not in England. But you should propose to Lucia—and much better, too."

"She wouldn't have me," cried Lomas, going white and red.

"Oh, I think she would. Girls usually accept the man who happens to propose to them, unless they actually want some other man to propose to them at the time."

"Are girls really quite so stupid as that? I know so little about girls," pleaded Lomas.

"Yes, they are quite as stupid as that. I was. Twice. The third time I rather made my own arrangements." She smiled. "I don't know that it really made much difference. The responsibility is greater."

"But Lucia is thirty years younger than I, and the most beautiful creature I ever saw."

"An admirable sentiment, on your side, to base matrimony on."

"She wouldn't have me. She would never have me!"

"I will ask her," said Mrs. Blandrey.

"Not point-blank?"

"Oh, no, not point-blank. Leave that to me."

So she said to Lucia: "Would you care to marry Henry Lomas?"

And Lucia answered: "Dear me, no."

"Don't be in such a hurry, child. Your step-father had a high-opinion of Mr. Lomas, and he always struck me as an exceptionally good judge of men."

"And of women," said Lucia mischievously.

"Well, he married *me*," replied her mother with simplicity. "Mr. Lomas has a good position, a kind heart, ample means, and no mother. You could hardly do better. I don't want your husband to have a mother as long as I'm alive."

"But he's so old, mamma."

"Well, you always say you like old men."

"Oh, he's not so old as that! What I meant was I can't sometimes get on with callow boys. Sometimes I can all right, when they talk about cricket and things they ought to know about. But I couldn't yesterday with the youth who *would* discuss the influence of Leonardo on Botticelli!"

"Just so, Lucia. You are too intelligent for the ordinary lad of your age, and you can't expect him to like that."

"I'm not intelligent at all, mamma, and I've never learnt anything——"

"Let me speak. What you need is a man in the prime of life. The prime, Lucia. What the French call *un homme jait*. Not a young man. A clever and ignorant girl should *never* marry a young man. Mark that! And remember to tell your daughter some day."

"Oh, mamma!"

"Henry Lomas is just the man to suit you. You won't tire of his conversation, and he'll never be rude to you. And he'll love you—what's it called?—for yourself!"

"Has he asked you to tell me this?"

"Certainly not. He will tell you himself. But a woman of my experience can guess what's coming."

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A brief pause. "He loves you, Lucia."

"But, mamma," Lucia spoke in a slow stammer; her face was to the dark, "mustn't a woman, when she marries, love the man, too?"

Mrs. Blandrey blushed. "I cannot imagine what you mean. Do you expect to go about loving men until one of them happens to propose to you?"

Lucia was too distressed for reply.

"Tell me frankly: Do you like Henry Lomas?"

"Very much. More than much. I think he is the very nicest man I know."

So Lucia Monck was married to her dead step-father's friendly friend.

CHAPTER IV

LUCIA had reflected little on marriage before she took the fateful step. Her mother's experiences and dissertations upon them had unconsciously left the whole mystery in a glare of gaslight—Mrs. Blandrey had got married as you take apartments, at the seaside, in the country, in London, for a change. Of course you got married. Mrs. Blandrey was very pleased with her daughter's match.

Lucia, at fifteen, had confided to her girl friend, Mary Nowell (now Mary Corry), a friend, like most friends, of occasion, proximity, maternal combining, her firm resolve to call her future consort "Jack," whatever his baptismal nomenclature might happen to be. She never called Henry Lomas "Jack" though Mary, a bridesmaid, reminded her of the childish vow in the vestry. It would have seemed even more incongruous than "Rob-a-Dob-Dob."

"Jack" was the one sore memory of Lucia's girlhood. She was not sentimental by nature, and her sheltered upbringing had not tended to make her so. People were comfortable about Mrs. Blandrey, in whose hands life prospered. Lucia had enjoyed things, with only a frequent and half-wondering regret about the father she was not allowed to know.

She had loved "Jack," a mongrel cur, picked up in the streets, with nothing to recommend him but ugliness and a pathetic stare. And the one great grief and grievance of her childhood had been his hygienic murder by her own mother, mortally afraid of any form of skin-disease. Lucia knew of a case, as bad as Jack's, which had been cured by consistent care and sea-baths.

On Jack's grave she had vowed never to have another dog

and had also registered that resolve about the Jack of the far future.

"I shall never love any one," she said with a gulp, "as I loved *him*."

"Silly," said Mary Corry.

"You don't understand, Mary; he had nobody but me."

Henry Lomas, struck by the long loneliness of business hours, brought his young wife one evening the ugliest, most pathetic fine dog he could find, Rob. He saw her in her morning work among her pets, pigeons, ducks—the horses: he had heard about the long-dead Jack casually, as Mrs. Blandrey would put such a thing, from Mrs. Blandrey. When Lucia realized the expensive gift, and the kind thought of the giver, she made the best of a bad business, and gathered the shapeless bundle in her arms.

"He *is* a beauty," she said.

"Jack wasn't uglier—was he?—or more pathetic?" queried Lomas.

"Jack was different."

Lucia was willing to let her mother rummage about her heart, even with company, but a cupboard or two she kept locked.

Henry chose the name. "I had a dog once called Rob," was his explanation. He was not imaginative. Well, he was not fanciful. Distinguish the two. You will spare yourself a lot of injustice.

Henry Lomas was what one's men friends call "straight." But women said you could trust him. That means a great deal more. He was shy of friendships, reserved by nature, but it didn't require any particular claim of friendship to get advice or assistance from him, if you applied for them. Mrs. Blandrey particularly liked him because, after poor Ted's death, he had pretended that the annuity connected with his Bank was due for six months longer than she knew it was. By the merest hazard of her cute wit she had found him out and been offended, but she frequently said she would die happy (a phrase) if her daughter could find a husband who would do *that*.

Well, Lucia had found such a husband and warmly admired

him. What she most admired and delighted in as a novelty was his work. In Mrs. Blandrey's daily round life had every form of interest but an object. Harry Lomas worked and enjoyed his work. It was not the sort of work a wife can share, nor did Lucia aspire to meddle with it. But one evening, as luck decreed, within the first twelvemonth of their marriage, she helped him with it. She went down to see why he remained in his den, an unusual thing, quite late at night. She found him, the carefully groomed quinquagenarian, crumpled over a lot of papers, his fingers in his hair.

"No, no," he said, "I must get this balance-sheet right. It's for the Hospital. I can't see where my mistake can be. It's quite simple. I've gone over it a dozen times. I'm twenty pounds wrong. Go away, dear!" She stood hesitating. It was past midnight: her glance dropped on the papers, and, by a chance of intuition:

"What figure is that, do you think?" she asked, pointing to one amongst many.

"A nine, of course."

"A seven, I imagine: some people do make their sevens in the most idiotic way."

From that day Henry Lomas believed his young wife's judgment to be vastly superior to his own.

He was a humble man and saw good in other people; he saw all her charms in her.

It was a great relief: his dread of "a child-wife," "a doll-wife," left him forever. He began, timidly, to talk of public affairs, matters of general interest, a little away from Mrs. Blandrey's cheerful patter, unexpectedly refreshed to find a woman at his table who could at least listen, with good grace, to reasonable talk.

"Lucia is perfectly happy," declared Mrs. Blandrey to a wide-spread circle of acquaintance. "I always foresaw that the pair would not tire of each other as equal-aged fools are so apt to do." No, the pair did not, intellectually, tire of each other. Henry Lomas kissed Lucia's forehead. Rob snarled.

And when Lucia wanted a complete change, she traveled forty miles away into the woodlands and spent a busily reposeful day with her Aunt Monck. That spinster lady dwelt in a beautiful pine and birch encircled home, spoilt by her servants, her neighbors, and, especially, Providence. Ill health and an unruffled temper combined to make her a legitimate object of universal sympathy: she was rich; she asked nothing of any one but kindness, and she rewarded that with an irresistible smile. In her seclusion she had thrown herself upon the study of nature: she had written regarding some rare plants of her neighborhood papers which had obtained a certain scientific success. Especially had she taken trouble—an immensity of trouble!—to tame some of the wild creatures about her lovely demesne: pets, caged or cloistered, there were none at Eden Lodge, but robins—even robins—flew in at the casements and squirrels picnicked on the balcony. Miss Monck, when she appeared in her bathchair on the pine heath, maintained that the wild bees accompanied her as a personal acquaintance: still more, in her own garden she showed you, if you were quiet and patient, her friendly butterflies posing on her long, ringed finger. True, it was sticky with honey. She had an elaborate theory anent the unity and continuity of the World-Soul, which nobody else need hear about, but which was an immense satisfaction to herself.

"Not see a portrait of her own father! Mr. Monck's picture to be put in a cupboard every time she comes. It seems monstrous!" said the new vicar's wife who, *qualitate qua*, was always able and eager to distinguish between right and wrong, especially wrong.

"Well, you see if a daughter is never to meet her own father, she had much better not have any impression of him at all."

"It seems monstrous," said the vicar's wife.

"What could my poor brother do? He abandoned the child to his wife, the daughter to the mother. If I can't speak for myself, he said, don't let any one speak of me at all! And as for the portrait, in merely a portrait one sees all sort of things that aren't there."

"He must have a bad conscience," said the vicar's wife.

"Or a very tender one," replied Ermentrude thoughtfully. She vainly beckoned from the invalid chair to a black and orange butterfly. "My brother is the most sensitive of men; he could not endure any one he cared about to think him better than he is. I know Adelaide, he said to me (Adelaide is my niece's mother). She would consider it her duty to describe me as having no faults, only follies. No man could bear the idea of being described to his only child as all follies. A little vice would be a relief."

"I don't fancy I understand your brother," said the vicar's wife, fanning herself.

"I fancy I do," replied the maiden-lady, nervously putting more honey on her finger and waving it to and fro. "Don't, please, say anything unkind to me about my brother. I don't think I could bear it. And here is my niece. Lucia, this is the wife of our new vicar, Mrs. Bulley."

"Pulley, not Bulley," corrected the stout-faced vicar's wife.

Miss Monck's little rose-leaf cheeks turned pink. "I beg your pardon," she answered mildly. "Sit this side, dear, will you? There, he came quite close that time."

"I am so pleased to meet Mrs. Lomas," said the vicar's wife, majestically smiling on Lucia, who grinned back. "Not so much for yourself as for your husband's sake. We appreciate so greatly the good work he has done for the Diddlebury Hospital. Though unfortunately a secular charity, we cannot deny that it has merit. Some day I hope we shall secure Mr. Lomas for the Church."

"My husband has so much on hand already," said Lucia fluttered. "His spare time—"

"It is those who are busiest that have most spare time," complacently remarked the vicar's wife.

"I told you so!" exclaimed the spinster. She triumphantly held aloft the sticky finger, on which the butterfly had consented to alight. "Hush! Don't stare at him: they don't like being stared at. What were we speaking of, when he first appeared? Oh, the new Mission Hall! I'll give you twenty pounds for it, Mrs. Pulley."

Mrs. Pulley fervently thanked the butterfly for making up his mind, and his patroness's. The spinster continued:

"You must forgive its not being more, because,—because—you know, Lucia!—when I subscribe twenty pounds for a church I feel it my duty to give forty to a chapel." She leant back in her chair, rather trembly, fragile among her frills, white and small, with a great pair of beaming eyes. The butterfly jumped.

"Forty—to—a—cha—*pell*!" said the vicar's wife, smoothing out something, she couldn't have told what.

"You see"—very apologetically—"there are twice as many Wesleyans as Episcopalians in and around Diddlebury; and I give five pounds to the Roman Catholics, and there are so few Jews: two pound ten must do for the Jews."

"I had no idea, Miss Monck, that you were an Agnostic!" The vicar's wife rose to her feet. The butterfly flew.

"I am not, please! Agnostics are people who say they know nothing and then know all they want to say. But I like to make sure that one is so very much better than the other. Did you ever read 'Lessing's Ring'?"

"I did not," said Mrs. Pulley, taking majestic leave. Lucia laughed softly, but Miss Monck heaved a sigh. "I wish I was poor.

No, I don't," she said. "You are looking dead-beat, Lucia."

"The walk was hot," replied Lucia.

"You have just the flush that Mrs Pulley would ascribe to radiant health. I should advise you to consult a doctor, had I not myself consulted seventy in the last forty-two years. They can't cure you, Lucia, but there's one thing they can do for you. They can reassure you about the horrible diseases you haven't got."

Lucia vaguely watched the flowers and the butterflies.

"And sometimes they are mistaken," meditatively added Aunt Ermentrude.

"I haven't seen a doctor, about myself, since I had the scarlet-fever. I came to consult you about my club. I want my boys to have a billiard-table."

Miss Monck laughed. "Well, I can let them have that, I suppose, without giving the public house a bowling-green."

"I don't want to give it, thanks, Aunt Ermentrude, but our vicar doesn't approve of billiards."

"I can't talk any more about vicars," exclaimed the spinster, sitting up with sudden asperity, "I must have a respite till after lunch. I have something far more important to communicate: Lucia, I am delighted you've come. You can tell Busk that I've at last succeeded in taking the temperature of rose-trees with Cialdini's thermometer. It rises, as I always felt sure it would, when a flower is picked, and it takes about twenty-four hours to become normal again. There's a marked difference between a clean cut and a tear. I must show you——" She called to her faithful attendant—she had none that were not faithful—and was soon engrossed in explaining long columns of figures amongst her insects and her flowers.

Lucia, returning in the late afternoon, drew down the blinds of the railway-carriage and closed unutterably exhausted eyes. "Is it possible," she said aloud, "that any human being can feel so dead-dog—tired?" To her horror a voice responded. It said: "Come unto Me, ye weary, and I will give you rest."

She opened the eyes in a wild hurry. An old man in rusty black and a top-hat sat opposite, benignant and perhaps a trifle ironic. An itinerant preacher. Lucia, glancing to the window, realized that he must have entered her otherwise unoccupied third-class compartment while she was dozing—she did not believe that she had been dozing: a sudden terror of unconsciousness seized on her. She said "Thank you," coldly, turning away, feeling she could not be displeased. Her heart thumped at the possibility of a faint. You couldn't travel alone, if you fainted. She had never fainted till recently. Was there something wrong with the bumping heart?

It was an immense relief to see waiting, at her own station, her own carriage, her own coachman, the sheltering home atmosphere at once. She was courteously grateful to the old man, who helped her to alight (and gave her a tract). "Home!" she said, as she got into the wagonette.

CHAPTER V

BEECHLANDS stands a couple of miles from the station—well, no, hardly as much as that. At the turn of the road by the south gate a victoria, coming at a furious pace, nearly ran into the steady wagonette. From the victoria, before it had righted itself, leaped Mary Corry, impatient and imperious as ever, her dinner-gown all rumpled, her face aflame.

"Oh, I'm so glad I've caught you," she cried. "Oh, just think what has happened!" and she burst into tears.

The heart thumped again and the sickness came on.

"May I get into your carriage? Oh, just look at mine!" sobbed Mary Corry.

There was blood on the carriage cushions. There was blood on the dinner-gown. Lucia was not the sort of woman that turns faint at the sight of blood:

"Oh, Mary are you hurt?"

"Not—not I. It was a cyclist, a mere lad, knocked down, just in front by a motor-car. The motor-car got away, and he lay in the middle of the road. I insisted on taking him into the carriage, of course: he was quite unconscious, and Jobson was so cross about it, and I had to help lift him"—she shuddered—"and I'm so small. And oh, Lucia, during all the long, quick rush to the doctor's, he did nothing but moan."

"Poor thing!" said Lucia, stroking Mary's hand.

"Here we are: I'm so glad. Have you any whisky? Let me get it! No, I feel I would rather sit down. You needn't look so white, Lucia. I'm not white." She put her hand to her burning cheek. "Jobson was simply furious." She glanced at the victoria crawling up the drive. "I hope Arthur won't mind too

much. Men are sometimes so odd about such matters. And, you see, he wasn't there."

"Was the boy hurt much?" asked Lucia, breathless.

Mary Corry sank down in one of the many veranda chairs. "Oh, too dreadfully. I waited: I couldn't help it. I could see my brother-in-law fuming over his spoilt fish all the time. I saw him as I—I helped the doctor. One leg will have to be amputated. Perhaps both." Her voice failed her. She drew forth a small pocket-handkerchief, and, seeing the stains upon it, let it fall with a cry.

"And the motor-car got away?" said Lucia.

"Yes, but what does that matter? Punishing those men wouldn't help the boy."

"Well—there is the question of damages, you see," said Lucia gently.

"So there is! How clever you are, Lucia! I should never have thought of that."

"It is the first thing Henry would have seen to—after the doctor," replied Lucia, gravely smiling. "But it can't be helped."

Mary Corry sighed a mighty sigh. "I'm afraid it can," she said. "I had quite made up my mind to forget it, but I suppose I must remember it after all. Lucia, I'm afraid I saw the number on the motor-car."

"Oh, what a good thing you did!"

Mary demurred. "I don't think I need remember it, *unless* Arthur refuses to help the boy."

"You might ask him—your husband—about that."

"I don't want to get even the wickedest people into prison through my fault," continued Mary. "It must be an awful thing to get some one else locked up through your means. It would haunt me of nights to think of them lying awake on their straw. And, you see, they saw I was stopping and getting out. I am not even quite sure whether the last figure was a five or a three. That's what makes me think I had better forget."

"The police will be able to settle that."

"Do you really believe they are so clever? Arthur says they

constantly lock up the wrong people. Only *imagine*, Lucia, if I were to get into prison a perfectly innocent person that had never been near the spot!"

"Put down the two numbers at once and talk it over with Arthur."

Mary Corry sighed again. "I suppose I must," she said; "but Arthur always has one opinion, and I have two. Have you got a pencil for me?" She fumbled with trembling hand among the pale green folds of her skirt. "If I hadn't seen the number, then Arthur must have paid. But the road was so straight—"

"Oh, Mary, your gown—!"

"You must lend me some frock of yours, and I'll go and explain. Oh, Lucia, the poor, poor lad! They'll have sat down by now without me any way."

"But no frock of mine could possibly fit you," expostulated the tall Lucia. "It couldn't be made to fit."

"No, and that is why I can wear it, give me a tea-gown. Why shouldn't I sit down to my dinner for once in my life in a gown that doesn't fit? Hundreds of nice women do so daily."

So Mary Corry drove off, still red-hot and trembling, a queer little figure, in a misshapen pink cloud, like a smashed bonbon. Lucia remained sitting in the still veranda. Her husband was dining in town: he had promised to be back quite early. She rang to say she had had tea at Eden Lodge and would not dine at all. "A mistake!" said the servants in the kitchen, who all liked their mistress. "Ill or well," declared the enormous cook, "we should all take our victuals regular." The evening began to fall: the scene was very peaceful. Busk came pottering round to put away things. He halted when he saw his mistress. He was always turning up, wanted or not, but he had the tact, when not wanted, to go. She roused herself and called him.

"Busk, I have a message for you from Miss Monck which will please you very much. Big news! An important discovery."

"Dear, dear," said Busk. He was too good a gardener not to believe, perhaps rather unwillingly, in Miss Monck. Besides, she

fitted into his philosophy. "The poor do the work," he would say. "And the rich make the discoveries." In truth, he was exceedingly proud of his scientific connection with the famous lady and preserved, in a faded *escritoire*, a few notes she had written him about plants. "Dear, dear," he said, "has Miss Monck discovered any more?"

"She has indeed, and she expressly asked me to tell you. By the aid of Cialdini's thermometer—you know about that?"

"Yes, ma'am, yes," said Busk patiently. He stood on the gravel in the half-light of the heavy shadows. Already the young moon was beginning slightly to silver the trees.

"She has taken the temperature of a lot of plants, more especially of rose-trees, and she has proved that the temperature rises when the flowers are picked."

Busk stood listening, his apple-tree figure bent forward, his sharp features intent, his eyes keen. "Would you say that again ma'am," he asked presently. Then, suddenly, with almost a cry: "No, don't say it again! I've heard it."

"When the flower is torn off, with a wound, not a clean cut, the plant has distinct fever for eight and forty hours. Then its heat gradually becomes normal again. She is writing a paper about it for the Royal Society. Is not that wonderful?" Lucia leant back, her hand faintly fondling Rob.

"Wonderful!" he repeated, and added, as if speaking to himself: "The plant has distinct fever for eight and forty hours." Ah, ma'am, I wish you'd never told me that!"

"Why, Busk. I thought you'd be so interested to hear. Of course, one feels——"

"Interested, ma'am? Is that the word? Indeed, I'm interested. 'Tis the one thing I'd hoped never to hear before I was dead! Suffer, do they? Like human creatures! I've known it these more than forty years and hoped to God it wasn't true!" He trembled as he stood there, in the deepening moonlight: the hand he extended shook. "Souls they have," he burst out, too fiercely excited to remember aught but need of utterance. "Souls like ours. Their temperature rises, like my Sarah's? *She's* found

out that. We all knew it, but we didn't believe it all the same. She shouldn't have gone and proved it. Ma'am! What's to become of us gardeners now?" With sudden anger he turned and tore a bunch of syringa blossom from the veranda-creepers and flung it on the ground. "There!" he cried. "That's done now. There it lies! It can die now. It's got life: does it feel dying? And the plant may go and have fever for eight and forty hours!" He stood staring down dully at the milky petals. Then he stooped slowly and, picking it up, he gently laid the flower in his gnarled old hand.

"But you needn't have killed that one," said Lucia.

"So I needn't, ma'am. We might have spared that *one*, with thousands being torn and trampled daily. Yes, we might have spared this *one*." He gazed down on the little calmly radiant stars. "There ought to be a law against picking flowers like there is against murder. Oh, I know I'm talking foolishness. But, ma'am, it's too terrible for sense."

"But we even kill animals," mildly protested Lucia.

"Animals is different," his eyes sought the dog, who quailed. "Animals has faults of their own. You wouldn't go for to compare the heart of a flower, ma'am, to the soul of a dog?"

"You mustn't philosophize too much, Busk," said Lucia kindly. "We can't live, if we do. Surely, the innocent flowers don't feel pain."

"Ah, ma'am, you're young: when you're old like me you'll have to go thinking. There's nothing else left," he shook his head, "I can't write, like Miss Monck, but I can't help thinking. And there's nothing to think of in the end, but just that we suffers innocent. We suffers innocent. I've thought it a hundred times as I picked the silly flowers. They say there's a young fellow in the road yonder to-night,"—he nodded—"knocked all to pieces by a motor-car. Would you tell me why, ma'am. This afternoon he was all right, and now? Well, he's done as much harm as the syringa, and he's in as bad a way!" He chucked the flower over his shoulder: Rob, suddenly waking up, jumped at it; with a cry that was verily an oath the old gardener snatched it from the

brute and crept reflectively away. Lucia could long hear his steps and his mutterings dying into the distance. The night was very still.

Lucia remained in the veranda, alone with the quiescent dog; she sat almost motionless, thinking the old man's thoughts. She knew him well, caring to know, which makes all the difference. Had he been born fifty years later, he would have been an argumentative board-teacher, or perhaps a faddish something semi-political. Instead of just simply a canny old gardener, with a turn for quiet talk.

At this moment it needed not the old man's words to set her thinking sadly; yet she had never seen him so deeply moved before. Like most self-controlled natures, she had been far more shocked, and shaken, than she knew by the vivid meeting with Mary Corry, the sight of the blood, the tale it told. Not for the first time the terror of life was upon her, the remorseless fatality that seems blindly to work ruin. The thunderbolt falling suddenly from the clearest sky. This boy gone out as usual to his work or his play, who might work again, doubtless, to keep life going, but would never play again.

Her maid came, with some pretext about a shawl, eager to discuss the accident. "A specially deserving lad, a member of the Young Men's Christian Association. In fact, their harmonium player. He won't be able to play any more harmoniums," said the maid. "Both legs——"

Lucia waved her away. She was patient with Summers, but really, at that moment, she felt she could not hear more.

The thunderbolt falling suddenly from the clearest sky! Her husband in the train every day of the week, in his carriage morning and evening—a signal wrong, a side-leap of the horse!—and the strong, hard-working man on a sofa perhaps for the rest of his life! She patted Rob's responsive head, ashamed of herself. There occurred to her a frequent utterance of old Busk's sad philosophy: "You can't live if you think of things." True: you can't live if you think of things. Yet, they happen daily, these "things." And what if they happen to *you*?

Henry was so imprudent. He drove such restive horses! He always seemed to jump first from the train. "Rob," she said, and laid her cheek against the great soft head. "This is foolish, wicked nonsense, Rob. And 'Them Above,' as Busk says, Rob, will look after you and me."

"What? confidences to Rob in the moonlight, Lucia? Well, you can't make me more jealous of him than I am!" Lomas came in, close behind her, in the moonlight, fresh from his rare little club dinner with a couple of old school-fellows from New Zealand and the Cape.

"Let's walk down to the lake," he said, "and see the moon on the water."

"It'll be just as usual," she said, casting about for the first pretext not to move.

"Lucia, you say that! Your lake! You must be——"

"Teasing you," she interrupted, and taking his arm, she dragged herself down with him to the gleaming waterside.

He told about his school-friends' travels. "They made me feel absurdly provincial," he said. "Few men nowadays have been away from home as little as I. Do you know, Lucia, I have been thirty years at the office next Christmas; doesn't that make one feel old. I must ask for a six weeks' holiday and we must go abroad."

"We're so comfortable here," said Lucia, leaning heavily on his arm.

"We shall come back. But I want to see the places everybody has seen, the Riviera, for instance, Italy. Your mother is always extolling the Riviera. How heavily you lean, Lucia! Are you tired after your long day? You don't really feel ill, do you? You eat and sleep all right."

"Yes, I eat and sleep all right."

He had disengaged himself to get her a chair. Busk had moved the chairs. He went further afield.

Lucia leant against the copper-beech. Suddenly Socrates the swan, awaking from some nightmare, arose to his full height and dashed flashing, slashing, crashing, across the dull moon-

A MODERN NOVEL

gleams of the water. He filled the still night, for a moment, with a vision of alarm. Lucia's heart leaped, stopped, seemed to move on in jerks. The dog broke into frantic barking.

"Quiet, Rob!" called out Lomas. "Do be quiet! Oh, Lucia, do stop him! How you spoil that brute! Hang you, Rob, stop that noise!"

The bull-dog only barked the louder, with a dumb animal's half-crazed anxiety and appeal. Henry hurried back, angry, trailing the garden-chair after him. And he found Lucia lying, a white mass, on the grass.

CHAPTER VI

SHUT the door and listen to me," said Lomas. The maid stood before her mistress's husband in the attitude which implies that whatever it is, she is not to blame. The maid's face was like a storm of hail, and her name was Summers.

"Is your mistress often like this?"

"No, sir."

"It depends of course what we mean by 'often.' When I carried her into her rooms, you said it had happened before?"

"It has happened before."

"How often before?" persisted Lomas feeling, not actually anxious, but judicious and judicial, resolved, as was his manner at the office, to get to the bottom at once.

"Occasionally," replied Summers, who could be no less judicial, and a deal more judicious, than most people.

"Have the goodness to explain," said Lomas with a tinge of annoyance.

"Twice in the last three months, sir. The last was ten days ago. I wanted my mistress to take some excellent tonic I have—I couldn't get on without it—she declined."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"She especially told me not to, sir. You are sure that was part of my duty?" Having thus turned the tables on her interlocutor, Summers slightly lifted her eyebrows, which was her way of smiling internally. "If so, I am sorry, sir," said Summers.

"That will do. Ask the doctor to look in here before he goes."

Lomas took up a bundle of bills from the table and began methodically checking them. He was certainly not anxious: still, you know, one likes to know! He held the usual healthy

man's opinion that there couldn't be much the matter with you, as long as you ate and slept. Like Busk. Lucia was always bright and full of mental activity: he could not say he had observed any change. Dear me, here was a blunder: a box of fifty Havannahs—he had had a hundred. How careless of the tobacconist! But for his, Lomas's, attention to things the money might have remained unpaid. With a frown he became engrossed in his figures, always a subject of interest to him. For he was the sort of man who adds up right, whilst laughing and talking, and who unconsciously, half unnoticed, puts things about him straight. In his little home-circle, with a precise, elderly mother, who still used the word "genteel," Henry Lomas had lived methodically ever since he could remember. Nothing unusual occurred: events, surroundings, even human beings fell naturally into their places and stayed there. And if something got away, you put it back, without fidgeting. Henry Lomas sat jotting down numbers, content to await the doctor.

The doctor was long in coming. Henry finished his accounts, tied the bills with a neat bit of string and put them away in a drawer: then he leant back, complacently surveying the agreeable appurtenances of his writing-table; handsome presents and personal mementoes, a fine water-color portrait of Lucia, a clever sketch of Rob by herself.

It was vexatious, her having these fainting-fits! But some tonic would soon set that right. He got up, restless, went to the telephone and telephoned to Lucia's mother, at Risleigh, some eighteen miles away. It was a relief, telephoning to her mother. Mrs. Blandrey replied:

"Lucia is well, but has occasional fainting-fits? Oh, by all means send for your doctor. Meanwhile I congratulate you heartily. My dear Henry, I wish you joy!"

The ear-tube dropped from his hand; he stood thunder-struck. Then, suddenly, he burst into snatches of some half-remembered hunting song. He, the middle-aged man of business, he sang and shouted about the room like a school-boy. The servants in the kitchen harkened with horror. In the middle he broke off, and

struck his forehead for the fool that he was, lest Lucia should have heard, upstairs!

He stood stock-still and took a mental survey of the house, of his improvements, of the bits of old furniture he had collected, of the trees he had planted and the gardens he had altered, the whole nice little spick and span property—it stood out before him in quite a fresh light. It was as good as it always had been, but it was also suddenly, differently better. A continuity had come into its advantages that made them all seem so infinitely more worth while. He was glad now, as he never could have been before, that he had planned this and added that. The beech-avenue he had planted—it had then seemed a reckless thing to do in his middle-aged bachelordom!—was growing splendidly: they would be fine trees thirty years hence! He must go and have a look at it to-morrow, with Lucia. Those two south rooms, now, that had always been left unoccupied, down the corridor, a little way from the rest——

The fine stamp-collection he had made as a young man: he had often told himself it was a pity not to keep it up. But for whom? Well, it was a pity, you see: it had been a thundering pity. Still, a lot of stamps must be quite valuable by this time, for he was no longer a young man. He smiled to himself: no, he was no longer a young man, but his youth would revive. He must take up that collection at once, so as to get it up to date in time. There were dozens of things he must do, and get ready. Why, one's whole life alters! He rummaged for the book of stamps in a cupboard which even contained some of his old toys. He smiled, very softly, over the toys. The soldiers—ah, well, he supposed those were very old-fashioned for the modern child, but any boy would appreciate his huge toy stable, which his father had had constructed and furnished for him, at lavish expense. The doctor, when he entered found Mr. Henry Lomas arranging a big toy stable with horses and harness, like a doll's house, on his study floor.

"I—I beg your pardon," said the doctor.

Lomas started to his feet. "I hadn't heard you," he stammered. "Well, how do you find her?"

"Not very bad," said Doctor Rook, meditatively.

"I thought not." He pushed the soldiers aside, under a newspaper, and, beaming: "Well, doctor, it does seem strange," he said, "that we should be consulting you for ourselves."

"Yes, usually it's the poor people," said Doctor Rook. "I don't remember having prescribed seriously for either of you before."

"Not so very strange, though, either," continued Lomas. "I suppose there's a reason for *this* indisposition, doctor, eh?"

"I suppose there is," replied Doctor Rook. "Only—'tis the devil to find out the cause in complications of this kind."

"What!" Henry Lomas stepped back so suddenly he trod on a wooden horse's leg, and snapped it.

"Oh, you mustn't be alarmed. There is nothing to be alarmed about it. I am sorry, if I said anything to alarm you!"

"You said nothing to alarm me," answered Lomas. He looked hard at Dr. Rook, and Dr. Rook looked straight at him. Both men felt, as they stood watching, that human words may mean too much for human strength, that human silence may mean yet more.

"So you're not quite sure what's the matter with my wife?" said Lomas slowly. He had known Dr. Rook all his life, for he had always lived in this neighborhood though not in his present house, which he had bought ten years ago, when his mother died. The doctor had attended old Mrs. Lomas through her last brief, painful illness. In fact, Henry knew Dr. Rook too well. You cannot live close to a medical man in the country, without knocking up against some of his mistakes. People speak of these, accurately or not, poor people, especially, very hard on the doctor who didn't cure them, or who didn't dose them enough. Some kind acquaintance had told Lomas of a case "exactly similar to his poor mother's but they sent for a first rate specialist, and the specialist pulled her through."

Rook hadn't pulled old Mrs. Lomas through: he had let her go. And there was that boy of the coachman's with the hip-disease. He had been quite wrong about that boy, at least, so the

other practitioner said, under whom the boy, it appears, got better.

Besides, Rook was an old man, naturally not in touch with recent developments. And medicine, so Lomas understood, had developed marvelously of late. Personally, of course, the doctor was a dear, good, kindly old gentleman, with his magnificent beard, and helpful eyes. A man who, all his life, in his own quiet way, had done all the good he could all around him, tending the poorest and the most wearisomely wealthy with unremittant sympathy and infinitesimal bills. He was wont to say he was old-fashioned before you asked him, and people like their physician to say that if they think they're mending. He was too fond (as you felt, if you didn't improve) of "letting Nature alone." Yes, he had the word "Nature" on his lips till you really grew sick of it, and cried out for "Science!" He was always getting the village lads to play games and to abandon "comforters," always fulminating against the expensive quack medicines on which the unhealthy poor waste such inordinate sums. In fact, he had laboriously analyzed the prime favorites, and published his analyses on a board in his front garden. There it stood, in huge letters, for any one to read. And he had offered to make up any of these (for they are all innocuous and rarely contain anything but steel and cathartics) and supply them for the money they cost him which was just about a tenth of their patented price. This action did him a deal of harm, for the poor distrusted the speculation (which largely advertised the quackeries), and the rich deemed the entire transaction undignified. He was an old man now, still far from wealthy; his children had left him and were doing well. One of them is an eminent London professor. But Rook lived with his old wife, contented, in the round of his lessening work.

"So you're not quite sure?" said Lomas. No medical man can like the question put quite in that way. Dr. Rook answered with one of his favorite, if not frequent, utterances.

"When we don't know," he said, "it's no use pretending we do. Half the harm in our world is caused by that. 'Invention is better than cure,' is a motto for the medicine mongers."

"But we must find out—we must find out," cried Lomas impatiently.

"There can be, I think, one complication only in Mrs. Lomas's case, I should advise you to have a specialist, to decide whether that complication exists."

"Have a specialist! Have half a dozen!" exclaimed Lomas.

"I should strongly advise, if you will allow me—I should urge you—to have one only, and to abide by what he says. Your own peace of mind is at stake, and hers. If the man I mean tells you there is no complication—well, then, Mrs. Lomas is only suffering from general debility, nothing more."

"A complication!"—a wild hope again flashed up in Henry's frank eyes. He gazed at the doctor with an appeal in his look that his lips refused to speak. And with one foot, mechanically, he kicked the broken toy.

The doctor smiled a pitiful smile. "I have been in practice for nigh on forty years," he said gently. "There are some mistakes I fear I could hardly make now."

"That mistake has been made by the greatest gynecologist living," replied Lomas gloomily, "in the case of my own cousin. And it killed her."

"All the more reason to call in the man I propose," replied Dr. Rook.

So he came, the great specialist, a man who gave renowned university lectures, a pigmy (in size) with a huge head and spectacles that somehow looked still bigger. He had an occasional impediment in his speech, absent from his lectures, or his private conversation, but useful, with patients, while he was making up his mind. He declared there was nut—nut—nothing for him to do, and he added, as a shockingly slow afterthought: "I am glad to say."

"I knew it," answered Lucia. "You poor, silly, dear, nervous husband! I am only most dreadfully tired. All I want is a little rest."

"All the same," continued the specialist in his deliberate way,

looking straight ahead at nothing. "I should not leave matters as they are."

"Oh, yes, yes, I only want rest," cried Lucia. But Henry turned to—turned on—his great specialist.

"What would you propose?"

"Pro-prose-pose, that is such a formidable word to employ," protested the specialist, whose name, by the way, was Nupp. There were few letters in the name, but you should have seen the alphabet after it! "Your lo-co-cocoa practitioner—an excellent man, quite excellent. He has frequently consulted me, and I have always found him quite satisfactory"—which means that Rook had never asked for a commission. "The pill business amusing, eh?—perhaps not entirely judicious, a little *infra dig.*, eh? But really witty. Invention is better than cu—cuckoo."

"You advise us to consult some one else?" insisted Henry.

"Don't call it ad-vi-vi-vice," said Sir Martin Nupp. "That is such a formidable word. The situation doesn't demand it. Put it in another way; why not? No harm done, eh? Prevention is better than——"

"Oh, not another doctor," put in Lucia faintly.

"My dear lady, why this prejudice against a deserving class? Ha! Ha! We shall not hurt you: you may make yourself easy on that score—rore."

"I don't mind the hurting," replied Lucia quietly (for Sir Martin Nupp *had* hurt her), "but the worry and the fuss. I would rather not have another doctor, Henry. I like Dr. Rook."

So Sir Martin took his departure, in something slightly approaching a huff. He was a great man, with many letters in the Directory and many figures at his banker's. He was not accustomed to contradiction from mere women, his flock of sheep. And he said to Henry Lomas in the entrance-hall (where the doctors say the dreadful things):

"I should be careful what I was about, my dear sir, or you may find yourself in for a great deal more sickness than you bargain for. We cannot allow our nervous invalids to arrange their car—car—cases for themselves, can we? Send for Russett."

"Russett," repeated Henry.

"Dr. Nathanael Russett, the great nerve specialist. The greatest living. I dare say he would consent to come, though it will be a favor. I shall write to him." The tiny man drew himself up. "I shall tell him what Mrs. Lomas has *not* got. I congratulate you."

"Thank you," said Lomas.

"It's a terrible, profession, is ours. We are glad when we can get away from a consultation like this, without leaving behind us a verdict of death."

"That is true," said Henry in a different tone.

"I am glad Mrs. Lomas is not a case for me. Is that the carriage coming up? A nice little property you have here. I envy you. But I shall die before I retire. It's a depressing life, Mr. Lomas. The higher you climb, the worse cases you see. Mrs. Lomas's is a positive relief. I feel quite happy over it." He walked out on to the steps and swept the landscape with his big eyes and bigger goggles. "Delightful!" he said, drawing a deep breath. "I was intended, you know, by nature, for a farmer. Do you breed pigs? I have a little farm in Berkshire, where I go and drop on Sunday's all the money I've made in the week." He pushed his little figure into Lomas's brougham and, as it was driving off, he thrust out his huge head. "Why don't I retire?" he said. "There's too much still undiscovered. Imagine the responsibility! I shall go and breed pigs as soon as I've found a cure for cancer. But I never shall. I never——" the words died away into the distance. Henry turned to go upstairs with them ringing in his ears. "I never shall. I never shall."

"Dr. Russett," he repeated and put down his name, lest he forget it, on an envelope. He smiled, as he noticed that the envelope was a black-bordered one, to think how his superstitious mother-in-law would have cried out.

Mary Corry, calling to talk over the motor accident, declared herself much pleased that Sir Martin Nupp had been to see Lucia. "I entirely agree with you that you're not ill, dear," she said, "but *that* is the very time to see specialists. It must be horrible

having them when they pull long faces and tell you you're going to die!"

"But, then, that can only happen once," said Lucia.

"Oh, my dear, no! What small experience you have of doctors! But Sir Martin Nupp never makes a mistake. His visit's as good as a reprieve. And isn't he diverting with his stutter? It isn't a bit like the real thing. Have you ever noticed, Mrs. Blandrey" (for Lucia's mother had hurried over with a heart full of queries) "that most of the great doctors cultivate (thought-pauses) in their speech?"

"I have never noticed anything in connection with doctors, great or small. I have never had anything to do with them and never intend to." Mrs. Blandrey touched wood. "As for specialists, I never even saw one. Oh, well, yes, Dupajoux. I can recommend him to you, Mary: if your complexion should begin to go off a bit" (which was a pretty way of putting it, when put at all).

"It can't begin: I never had any," answered Mary coolly. "I love specialists. I've consulted half a dozen. I love to hear them tell me I haven't got their complaint. Then I pull a face, and so they send me on to the next one."

"That's what Nupp has done," said Lucia.

"Of course." Mary laughed merrily: then her face saddened over. "I am going to have the greatest surgeon in England to see Luke Willes—my poor boy, you know—Arthur said I might. I am going to have Brass."

"That was very good of him," said Lucia.

"Well, he said I might, if I'd promise not to see another specialist for myself, for a whole year—and I think that was very good of me."

"And what will you do," questioned Mrs. Blandrey with interest, "if you happen to fall really ill?"

"Oh, I never am really ill. I feel things, and then I go to a specialist."

"So you must try not to feel things for a whole year," said Mrs. Blandrey, amused. "You'll have to mind your diet."

Not that I ever did, but, then, I never feel things. You don't think I'm stouter than I was, do you, Mary? And who, pray, is Luke Willes?"

Mrs. Blandrey drove off with Mary Corry, discussing Paris fashions. For Mrs. Blandrey persistently realized that Mary might dress better than she did, and Mary flattered herself that she dressed exceedingly well. Mrs. Blandrey possessed a distinct intuition for "your style," and she used the gift entirely in the furtherance of married happiness. She had constituted herself the Great Apostle of Pleasing Apparel among young wives. "There's many a knot comes undone," she said, "for want of a little neat tying." She counted on both hands with great relish the cases in which she thought she had defeated the Divorce Court. "It's no good for me to say I don't hate," she said, "for I do. I hate that Divorce Court Man. I had it all my own way with him, and I hate him all the more."

"Are they gone?" said Henry Lomas, peeping in. He walked to the great bay window and flung up the blinds. "Just look at the sunset, Lucia! Isn't it glorious?"

She lifted herself on one elbow.

"Lucia, how tired you look!"

"Dear old chap, you mustn't go telling me I look tired."

"Then you mustn't look it. However, Russett will put you right in six weeks."

"Did Sir Martin say that?" demanded the sick woman with swift insistence.

"Well, no. But he implied it."

"I don't want to see this Dr. Russett. A nerve doctor, Mary Corry says. My nerves are all right."

"Lucia, for my sake! Think what it means for me. I'm all alone downstairs. You've spoilt me, dearest. Oh, please get well."

"Henry, if I consent to see this other man, you must promise me one thing."

"What it is?"

"Promise me that, if the others do all the rest, we may give

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the poor boy without legs a piano! Summers says he cares most about his playing."

"Let me kiss your eyes, Lucia! What a good name is yours for yourself!"

"But you haven't answered?"

"Yes, I have, dearest. Now I must leave you to lie still. Did you ever see such clouds?"

Hardly had the door closed, ere Lucia rang for her maid. "Draw down all the blinds, please," she said, "and close the curtains as well."

CHAPTER VII

DR. NATHANAEL RASSUTT ("Gunpowder and Jam" at the Hospital) stood, hard at work, before his library fire.

His full life had many labors, none perhaps so entirely engrossing as this concoction of a new sauce in a little silver pot. He was a man of connoisseur-ships, but the culinary headed them all. As he stirred the rich mass with a crystal "mixer," he was laughing heartily over the story he had just told his laughing wife. He was a fine-looking personage, past sixty, florid and flowery, of stately presence and most courteous address. Sugary he was to everybody, except in his occasional outbursts—whence his sobriquet. He had invented the "mixer" and also a complicated and absurdly costly "cooker" for the "chicken-porridge" he recommended to all his (non-hospital) patients. The recipe for that restorative (equal to Brillat-Savarin's) can be found on an early page of his "How to dine well and keep healthy" (37th thous.), and also in his "Nerve and Nerves." Besides these standard works Dr. Russett has written a charming little book on "Tintoret" (second edition); and the well-known pamphlet on "Motor Clothes" is his. When you have read "Motor Clothes" (as every hygienic motorist has), you go and buy your things at Cavendish's; though the name doesn't once occur in the essay. And you can only get the "Cooker" in Zaris at Fagelle's.

"Yes, wasn't it quite too funny?" he chuckled to his spouse. "But it wouldn't do for that sort of thing to occur too often. 'You *must* have some of this delicious soup,' says I to her. 'My doctor won't let me touch soup,' says she. 'What a fool your doctor must be!' says I, from sheer devilry; the soup was too

awfully good. 'I do hope he is not,' says she. 'And who, pray, is your doctor?' says I. 'Dr. Russett is his name,' says she. 'By-the-by I did not catch yours?' A charming and witty woman. I forgave her on the spot. She'd only consulted me once, of course, many years ago. I'm surprised I didn't remember her."

"It was shockingly imprudent," said the prosperous, laughing lady. A matron, with bracelets, fat, and an air of being somebody's spouse.

"My dear, I can afford an occasional imprudence. Besides, the story may advertise me, if it gets about. Many people like to hear that their doctor doesn't believe in the diet he recommends. That furnishes them with the excuse they are always looking for."

"Advertise you!" exclaimed the lady scornfully.

"Why not?" He watched his sauce rising, rising, watched eagerly, and, at exactly the right moment, blew out the flame, "We live in the twentieth century. I challenge you to find a single case of success in any walk of life, high or low, in our time, that hasn't thriven on self-advertisement. Advertisement is the manure of a modern reputation. As for me——"

"Now, Nathanael," interrupted the lady, with sudden asperity, "I don't want to hear your self-accusations again!"

He answered her meekly. "That is unwise. As I have told you before. (When a man is such a gigantic humbug as I am, he must confess sometimes where nobody can hear him, or he'll go confessing where they can." He reflectively tasted his sauce. "It wants just a drop more 'Soya,' " he said. "I have sometimes debated with myself, on that account solely, the possible advisability of my joining the Catholic Church."

"What nonsense, Nathanael!"

He lifted his saucepan and looked at her. "My dear Poppet!" he said—for thus he entitled (a reminiscence of youthful days in a garret) that bedizened and bejewelled matron—"when a man like me seriously debates a thing, it is never altogether nonsense. Make a note of that! It would be an immense relief"—his voice suddenly filled with something that must have been real

feeling—"to pour out every thing into an irresponsible ear—a man's ear—and so to get rid of it. But it wouldn't do to go talking to Jack!"

"Nathanael!" screamed Mrs Nat.

"No, the man I most wish to confide in is the man I must pick my every word for. My own son! Oh, leave me alone for a moment!" He turned his broad back on her and bent over his saucepan. "Do you know, my conversation *might* be a big boom," he resumed in a lighter voice. "People nowadays rather like religion in their doctor. How fashions change. One no longer knows how much or how little to believe in."

"Believe in yourself—your whole self! You are a great man!" cried Mrs Nat, enthusiastically. "Let me taste your sauce! All that talk's just modesty."

He smiled contemptuously. "That's a good working theory," he answered, "stick to it. No, I shan't let you taste: you know you've no palate. Women never have. They're all tongue." He resumed his nice measuring and weighing—"one poor scruple!"—by the aid of specially constructed aluminium scales. "Hush," he said, "don't distract me! One—two—three!—What's that?" An imperious telephone summons rang out from the adjoining cabinet; he dropped the "mixer" into the "cooker." "My telephone! That must be important!" he cried, and ran out.

For he had a private telephone, with a secret number, in a closet off his library. Mrs Russett folded her plump hands on her lap and smilingly inspected her numerous rings.

"Yes," she heard her husband replying, "yes, yes—Of course. Yes—What? What are you saying?—Nonsense!—Impossible! Infamous! Scandalous! I won't hear of it—I refuse.—Oh, absolutely—Unconditionally—Of course—You know me. I never was so put out in my life!"

Mrs. Russett left off admiring her rings.

A pause. "What?—No, I tell you—What?—He won't, won't he? Well, then let him won't! Tell him he may go to—Mrs. Russett is in the next room."

He stalked in, flushed and haughty, his head thrown well

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back. Mrs Nat. realized, flustered, that she liked her Nathanael to look like that. What a brave man he was! She had never been afraid of his tantrums in the days of their earliest love.

"It was Scragge," he said, naming his agent. "The man Pither has just been to tell him he won't sell. He wants four thousand more."

"Offer him two," said Mrs. Nat.

Her husband suppressed a cry of impatience. "Every woman fancies she can bargain. Scragge's been offering all the morning; he won't take a penny less."

"Have you nothing in writing?" asked Mrs Nat. She wrinkled all her wrinkles, shrewdly.

"Should I be in such a state, if I had? The man's done us! Done Nat Russett! Done that fool Scragge! Diddled Nat Russett! It maddens me! Such a place to settle the Sanatorium in! Everybody talking about it already! Royalty interested! When the Princess yawned yesterday, whilst I was speaking to her: 'I am always so tired, Dr. Russett,' says she, 'I shall have to go into your home.'"

"She only said that to cover her yawn."

"Undoubtedly," replied the doctor, filled, for the moment, with a furious desire to box his dear Poppet's thick diamond-hung ears. "Still, it indicates that she knows about the Sanatorium. Why, the staff's engaged—Dr. Dosel's coming—patients due in a month or two—it's impossible."

"He's heard all that, the man Pither—the rogue!" said the lady between her set teeth. The rich doctor's wife (once so poor!) loved and cherished two Powers on this earth—she would hardly as yet have spoken of that dear lad, Jack, as a Power. The Powers were Gold and Nathanael: she could not endure to think of these close friends in contest. She spoke bitterly: "There oughtn't have been so much for him to hear!"

Nathanael's reply was all gunpowder, not a drop of jam. Several expletives, an allusion to Job's comforters, the utterance of an ancient conviction that Mrs Nathanael was mistakenly proud of not being a fool. Then a change to quiet resolve. "I

never was done in my life," said Russett calmly. "And I shan't be done now. It would kill me to think I had been done. We must find another place *at once*. It won't be an easy thing, and the place, when found, can't be as good as Pither's, but find it we must immediately. I shan't rest till it's found."

"You wear yourself out in the cause of humanity," said Mrs. Nathanael, cowed. When her husband swore at her, she always waxed humble and loving, a jewelled worm.

He eyed her with a queer slow grin. "What an actress you are, my lady!" he said, and no term of endearment sounded half so sweet to either as that phrase of prophecy! "You know as well as I do, Isabella, the whole thing's just a big financial and social spec."

"But Jack doesn't!" said the lady very quickly. "If I'm a good actress, so much the better for you and Jack."

"Jack's a boy. A mere boy," said the father annoyed.

Mrs. Russett's broad yellow face turned pink in parts with vexation. "Jack's the cleverest son parents ever had," she cried. "He worships the ground that his famous father treads on. And some day he'll be as great a doctor as you!"

"Such cases of heredity are rare," replied the doctor coolly. "Nature exhausts itself over a Napoleon." He returned to his mixing and messing. "I am not only a great doctor," he said, adding pepper. "I am also a successful doctor, which is by no means the same thing. I do not see that my son John has in him the elements of success which I had. He certainly has fancies which I couldn't afford. True, he finds *joie gras* sandwiches where I had to hunt for a crust. 'Tis a terrible handicap, that, a successful father, Isabella!"

"I should have said quite the reverse!"

"Like nine people out of ten you would have been wrong. Believe me, there's nothing like a bankrupt father to make a son succeed. If the son's got it in him. Well, well, Mr. Pither has momentarily done for Mr. Jack!"

"We shall keep him with us. I never was anxious for him to go and take charge of that home."

"There you're wrong again. As usual. You're all heart and no brain, Isabella. He was mad on it, himself. And it would have put him in immediate touch with the richest lady patients. A difficult *clientèle* these women of our century with nothing the matter but their wealth. Vouvray can manage them. Nobody can manage them quite as well as Vouvray."

"And yourself," said Mrs. Nat.

"Besides myself, I meant," replied the great Dr. Russett calmly. "Of course we know, you and I, that I can manage them. But in a different manner from Vouvray. Now, I couldn't have a Sanatorium; my—what shall we say?—nerves wouldn't stand it. That's why I want Jack to start with one. There's no quicker modern way to grow rich."

"You're rich," said Mrs. Nat. "I don't believe you know how rich you are."

He set aside his silver pot. "Down to a penny," he said. "I could give you the exact figures, this moment, of last month's balance-sheet. I couldn't stand the drudgery if it wasn't for Scragge's monthly balance-sheet. 'Tisn't a bad profession—is it?—if you know how to make it pay. But nothing pays like a big Sanatorium. That sauce is all right now. I don't tell you about money, my Poppet, because the best of women lose their heads over figures. Is that you, Jack, with the letters? Read me that one. I can see it is from old Nupp."

Mrs. Nat. began putting away the bottles and essences in a beautiful little old Flemish cupboard; the house was full of exquisite things.

"General debility?" he said, interrupting his son. "That's like old Nupp. There's no such thing as general debility: it always has a local cause. A nice little property in the country? Circumstances undoubtedly affluent? I shall go."

"The name is Lomas," said Jack.

"Lomas!" repeated Mrs. Nathanael. "We had a baker once whose name was Lomas. He was very rude to your father about not paying. Ah, well, that's long ago. He drank himself to death."

"It could hardly be the same man," said Jack, dangling the letter.

"No, and now I remember the name was Lowndes."

"My sauce is a perfect success," interposed Nathanael. "Jack, I've invented a new fish-sauce, I feel as happy as Dumas, or Rossini. I shall call it Sauce Isabelle."

CHAPTER VIII

"IN the first place let us calmly survey the situation," said Dr. Russett. He stood by the big bedroom window. That was his stock phrase with all paying patients. It soothed them, made them feel that their lot was in safe hands (such beautiful hands!) and that something was going to be done immediately to set it right.

"The situation would do excellently for a Home," thought Dr. Russett, looking out. Aloud he said:

"You are suffering, my dear madam, from a commencement of nervous exhaustion——"

"Thank God it is only that!" burst from Henry, who had waited, intently listening, the lines marked about his eyes. He was not as young as he used to be. He added more calmly: "You were quite right, you see, about yourself: you are only nervous and tired."

Dr. Russett waved the husband aside, like a mosquito. He disliked husbands: they always made trouble. Both the indifferent and the too fond. The too fond were worst. "Functional exhaustion," he continued, with the full stress of his fine organ on the first word. "Now such complaints, though—not—mortal, are apt to be very persistent. The treatment—takes—time." I must put things plainly, he said to himself; the husband's a fool. Russett divided the human race, though he was hardly aware of the fact, into fools and Dr. Russett. His career entitled him to do so.

"I think I can promise you complete recovery," he added quickly: he was not one of the many specialists who search for their words: his came to him with the precision of a pendulum. "But you must put yourself entirely in my hands."

Lucia lay listening, with a sort of suspended sigh in her throat.

"We will do anything," said Henry. It all seemed to him so new, and so desperate. As if—as if, driving along his daily road to the station, he had suddenly found rocks right across it, and an African lion a-top.

"That is wise. That is quite the essential and sensible attitude," approved the great physician, with a keen glance towards the couch, "I trust it is also that of our invalid?"

"I only want to rest."

"Well, madam, I had better tell you one thing. (A pinch of gunpowder.) The more you rest in this condition, the more tired you will be." He waited a second for his words to take effect. "A charming water-color! Yours is it? (A drop of jam.) Well, for the moment, we need complete, scientifically organized repose." He took her hand: Rob, at the foot of the couch, growled. "Ah, a faithful attendant! But he doesn't recognize your true friends: that's where the intellect comes in—Dr. Rook is downstairs? An interesting personality, Mr. Lomas. Invention is better—ha! ha! First-rate, but hard on the patent-pill people. They have their uses, the patent-pill people. Would you order my motor to be sent round, while I speak to Dr. Rook?"

"Tell *me*," said Henry, in his own room, his back against the door, his face to the two silent physicians. "Tell me all. Tell me the worst." He was strong and broad-shouldered, but he was no longer a young man: he had not a young man's hopes. His daily life had been a simple round of duties and comforts hitherto: his sorrows had been such as naturally befall the race. When his relatives said he had never known misfortune, he would quote, apologetically, the one tragic episode, never forgotten, the discovery of the defaulting, married clerk, the sobbing wife and children, the criminal proceedings he had vainly striven to arrest, the whole inevitable tragedy. To-day he stood there, in his spruce summer-suit, middle-aged, carefully shaven. Dr. Rook's kind eyes were fixed upon his face.

"There isn't any worst," said Russett fretfully. "I have

told your wife the whole truth. It is a case of functional neurasthenia—eh, Dr. Rook?—constitutional, of course, as always, super-induced, in nine cases out of ten, by an acute, infectious illness. Had the patient—are you aware, Dr. Rook?—ever scarlet-fever, or typhoid, or measles?”

“I cannot say,” answered Dr. Rook.

Dr. Russett imperceptibly lifted his florid eyebrows. These small fry of the profession! Why, they never rise to the faintest conception of what the whole thing is about!

“I can tell you,” said Lomas, much impressed. “She had scarlet-fever at the age of sixteen.” From that moment he surrendered entirely to the great Light of Medicine, believed in him unconditionally to the end.

“At sixteen! The very period! Well, well, we must try to get her right in spite of the scarlet-fever. But I warn you we shall be a long time about it. The great thing is to get her away from her surroundings—eh, Dr. Rook?—a radical change!”

Dr. Rook walked away a few steps and back again. He heard the bewildered Henry exclaim: “Her surroundings? They are surely the most suitable——”

“The more suitable they are, my dear sir, the worse for her! Everything that is done at home to alleviate only aggravates the case!”

“I wish I could understand,” said Lomas. Dr. Rook had come close, but he took his eyes from the man’s face.

“You must remove her at once to a Sanatorium,” answered Russett pertinently, feeling his watch. “I should recommend Vouvray. Dr. Alphonse Vouvray at Gringinges-sur-Aulch, in the Vaudois Alps. The best man. Always go to the best, whether it be boots or medical treatment. I will write to him. And you had better apply at once for rooms. You will find them difficult to secure.”

“Yes,” said Lomas quite dully. “Yes.”

“The sooner you start, the better.”

Dr. Rook put in a word: “How long do you think the

treatment will last?" His great colleague smiled on him unpleasantly.

"Impossible to say. These cases, as you must be aware, *creep*."

"A year?" persisted the village doctor. Henry quivered.

"Well, a great deal may be done in a year. Say a year."

"But that means——!" exclaimed Lomas, "that means——! Good God, I don't know what it means!" He went white; he clutched at something behind him, a book-case; he stared at Russett.

The great doctor did not reply. He always avoided all the non-medical complications. Naturally. He had nothing to do with them: he had long become accustomed to seeing them surge up for one moment before him and as swiftly sink out of his sight. "I will write to Dr. Vouvray," he said dogmatically. "I trust everything will prove satisfactory. I could not put you in better hands. I think I hear my motor. Good day." Dr. Rook conducted him to the door. "A nice little property. Beautifully kept, etc."

And—well outside the door: "If there's a spinal complication, of course there's no hope of improvement. I'm pretty sure there's not. Pleased to have met you. Invention—eh?—ha! ha!"

Henry Lomas remained staring at the book-case and gradually he realized that he was reading the names of his few favorite authors: Fielding, Thackeray, Balzac. The first thing you miss in an hotel existence, the one thing you never bring away from home. He turned round, as Rook came back.

"A year?" he said. "Two years?" Then, before the other's reflective silence: "I must give up my post," he cried. "This whole place!—we must sell it. We must give up everything, and go abroad!"

"No, no," expostulated Rook alarmed. "It isn't as bad as that. Consider——"

"I needn't consider. I can't let Lucia, ill as she is, go alone to that impossible place. I can't—I *won't*—keep my post at

the bank, with indefinite leave. I can't retain this house, without salary, meanwhile spending heaps of money abroad. All that's quite plain at once. I can spare Lucia the torments of indecision by grasping it before I go upstairs." He walked to the door. Dr. Rook laid a hand upon his arm.

"There is still an alternative," said Dr. Rook miserably.

"Which? To consult another specialist? Oh, I don't think so. This man seems immensely clever: why, he knew about the scarlet-fever!"

"No: there's no good in running to others after Russett. It's almost a pity you had *him*."

"Sir Martin Nupp advised it."

"Yes, Nupp advised it. You're not obliged to go to this Swiss doctor right away."

"But he said 'immediately!' August's nearly over: that doesn't matter much, if we're to stay there two years, but better get our start in fine weather. Oh, of course we must follow his advice. Why, he traced the thing at once! said it was the long-forgotten fever!"

"Yes, he said it was the fever."

"Amazingly clever that was! It's a wonderful science, Rook" (Rook felt small). "And he can have no personal interest in sending us to that Swiss doctor out there!"

"Well—he gets his percentage, I fancy, as long as you stay with Vouvray. Mind you, I don't say he isn't honestly advising you for the best. I feel sure he is. But he probably gets a percentage."

"Ah, he gets a percentage!" Lomas pulled himself together. He waited a moment. "Do you know, I think that's only fair from a business point of view. Just as I should take a commission—oh, of course we must do it!" He was rapidly getting angry with his companion. "Never should I forgive myself, if my wife were to grow worse!"

"I see," said Rook resignedly, "I suppose so. Russett has an immense reputation. You'll always feel you've done all you could."

"And he promised recovery, Rook!"

"Yes he as good as promised recovery."

"Have you ever heard of this man, Vouvray?"

"I have not."

"Well, you see?" There could be no answer to that. How much there was in his profession whereof this little country doctor had never even heard. Why, Lomas imagined he had come across the name Vouvray (a mistake but no matter). Dr. Rook didn't inquire about former illnesses. He was too fond of his nightly rubber to study the medical reviews. Still, Russett had been almost rude to the good old chap. Henry warmly shook the old doctor's hand.

"Thanks for all your help," he said.

"Indeed, I only wish I could help you," said Dr. Rook.

Then Lomas was left alone, with the lamps, in the silent house. Already the shadows lay heavy outside: Dr. Russett had not motored across till the end of his full day's work. It was a beautiful summer night. Henry sat down, squarely, with his elbows on the table, and set himself to read Sherlock Holmes. He liked Sherlock Holmes. But he kept losing his clue.

The maid knocked at the door. "My mistress is asking to see you, sir."

"I'll come up at once, Summers: I was afraid to disturb her." He went through his dressing-room, which he now used to sleep in, and, taking up a lamp, paused for a precautionary glance at his face in the glass. There was nothing unusual about the face. The light caught the grey glint in his bright hair. He saw it.

"Come in! I want to see you," said Lucia. He sat down beside her, leaning against the bed. "I don't mind," she said. "I wanted to tell you not to mind either. I shall soon be downstairs again. But first I must lie quiet. I feel as if I could lie in bed for a week." The words cut him with their unconscious irony: but also to one who knew her only in her active day, filling the swift hours with whatsoever her two hands found to do, those few words revealed how ill she felt. "Lie in bed a whole

week!" He sat gazing at her, by her side, in the dimly lighted room, unable to speak out the hideous truth. When at last he broke the oppressive silence, it was to say thoughtfully, very softly:

"You are so young, Lucia!"

She moved uneasily, and took his hand. And he said it again.

"So young! Now I, who am old and grey, it wouldn't seem strange if I felt tired. And I don't."

"Not grey; you haven't a grey hair, Henry. Nor old."

"Has your love never seen the grey hairs, Lucia? Oh, dearest, we must do anything and everything to make you well again! What does anything matter, compared with that? 'All that a man hath will he give for his life!' Why, of course, what else should he keep it for? What would the whole world profit him, if to get it he lost his soul?"

Lucia lifted herself on one elbow. "Oh, no, no, no," she cried fervently, "health's a fine thing, Henry, but it's not worth the world! It's not the soul!"

"It's worth all I can give," said Lomas. He said it again to himself, as he tossed on his sleepless bed through the dragging midnight hours. "Why, Lucia's got her whole life before her!" he said, "to make or to mar." Sick of tossing, he crept to the window. He did not remember a bad night in his own house since that lamentable affair of the defaulting clerk. That was ten years ago. How uncomfortably one sleeps in hotel beds! He had never noticed the harsh stroke of the Dutch clock on the landing: he now hoped it had not disturbed former guests. It seemed almost incredible that clock should be such an accurate time keeper (his morning train was safe in its hands), when one realized now the inordinate waits between every slow half-hour!

He drew aside the curtains; the whole outside world lay in a tranquil radiance of moonlight. But it was *his* little world he was looking at, too painfully illumined, in its silvery verdure and foliage, as if cruelly enhancing, by every means in its power, each beauty he had loved so long. That faint gleam to the far right was the slate roof of Busk's cottage; he had never seen

it stand out so clearly. The broad, shiny patch at the bottom was, of course, the water; he had frequently noticed how that caught the gleam. The swans were awake, too, it seemed. One of them, at least, a vague spot, appeared to be moving across the burnished metal. It relieved him, in the tumult of his distress, to feel that some other creature was also waking. Doubtless "Socrates."

He smiled grimly to himself, for the name struck a cord of association that tightened round his heart and, in tightening, braced it. After all, when a man suffers the inevitable, he must call philosophy to his aid. And the mere name of the great philosopher hero of Athens brought strength to this lonely watcher at the window to-night. He gazed out at the calm loveliness before him with set teeth and tranquil eyes. It was a very quiet tragedy, as the deepest mostly are.

Next morning he went back to his work—still his work—in the city. It was horribly illumined, in the full glare of day, by the same cold, white, half-dead moonlight. Each little item stood out under that new coloring. And beneath the false light the second scene took shape in the first act of that simple tragedy, in which there were still so many scenes—ay, and acts—to come.

CHAPTER IX

WELL, I can only repeat," cried Mary Corry, "that, if you are to do as the specialists tell you, your life will be a perfect—curse! I hope that wasn't swearing," added Mary. She was bright and brown and alert as usual, in a big feather boa ("not the right sort of boa, last year's boa," says Mrs. Blandrey), that hung down to the ground over her white serge suit.

"You had much better get up instead of lying moping there, and put on your new things and come with me," said Mary. "I want you to come to my poor Luke. There's a box in the hall from Madame Parédi's, and I'm dying to see what's inside it." Lucia smiled at this too apparent helpfulness from a friend who had never taken much interest in other people's clothes. Still, she rang for Summers and got the new dress laid out. Mary said it looked perfectly lovely, but you couldn't judge without seeing it on.

Already Lucia experienced that bitterest bitterness of sickness for the valiant, the being helped by the healthy not to give way.

"My dear Lucia, do make an effort! Our doctor wants to cut off my poor boy's legs. And I fear it is absolutely inevitable. But Arthur said I might have Brass, you know, though they haven't found the motor-car people. I want to tell you a great secret, Lucia. I'm simply bursting to tell somebody. I'm afraid, as Arthur had promised he'd help Luke, if they didn't find the motor people, that I—didn't remember the right number, after all!"

"You gave them the wrong one!" exclaimed Lucia. "But that's accusing the innocent!"

"No," said Mary demurely. "They told Arthur I was a hundred and seventy-seven thousand ahead of the number of motor-cars in the United Kingdom, so I couldn't have got my figures quite correct, they said."

"Arthur calls me a fool, which is rude of him," added Mary. She cast her eyes down, "but he says he'll help Luke." She cast her eyes up. "Of course I loathe motors," she said, "for we don't possess one. I only don't loathe them when I'm inside a friend's."

"I like them well enough, but they don't like me," said Lucia. "The vibration turns me sick."

Her friend gave a positive whoop of triumph. "Now, Lucia, that just proves, once for all, how your symptoms are purely nervous! I knew they were. Why, vibration's the new great remedy against sea-sickness! It's in all the papers. People sit in chairs that are worked by a dynamo, and trepitate across the channel. I've caught you now!" cried Mary Corry.

"What was your surgeon's opinion of Luke Willes?" asked Lucia quietly, with but faintly flushing cheek.

"He's coming to-day, didn't I tell you? That's what I'm here for, to induce you to accompany me. You must come, Lucia. It'll do you an immense deal of good to see how ill my poor lad is, to see him suffer! His two legs——"

"Yes, I know," said Lucia hastily.

"My poor Luke has the oddest, most unreasonable father, I really want you to come and help me very much."

"I will come," said Lucia desperately, and began struggling into Madame Parédi's new things.

"The jacket has a fold across the back, ma'am," remarked Summers.

"Has it? I don't see it. It can't possibly matter," exclaimed Mary. "I'm sure you feel happier already, dear?"

"It *has* a fold," said Lucia, between two mirrors. "Of course I can go out with it as it is, but I should have felt a great deal happier, Mary, if my jacket had not had a fold across the back."

"You can't be very ill to talk like that," said Mary, marching

to the door. Before going, some superfluous instinct caused her to rebel as what she (rightly) deemed an expression in Summer's expressionless face. "If Mrs. Lomas were to need a nurse, Summers, I wonder would you come to me?" The maid murmured a sound that might have meant anything, but the question was imperiously repeated.

"I'm afraid, ma'am," said the maid, her eyes on the carpet, "I shouldn't be happy with a lady that didn't mind a fold across her back."

"Or a slap in her face!" said Mary, laughing, to Lucia, as they passed downstairs. "I like cheeky servants—other people's. Their supineness is too much for me. Oh, I know Arthur says I demean myself. If I never demeaned myself in Arthur's eyes, I should be dead of *ennui* in a month."

"You're sure there's some real use in my coming with you?"

"Of course there is. For me and for yourself. I've only got the little pony-chaise—I can't have the victoria, you know, because the victoria——"

"I saw it," said Lucia hastily, stepping in. As they drove along the quiet lanes, in the old-fashioned wicker basket-chair, Mary Corry talked incessantly, of bridge (which she played, for the moment, with her whole mind, heart, and soul) and of her symptoms (which somehow didn't fit into each other, or into the human frame), and especially of all the splendid things she was going to make Arthur do for poor Luke.

"That's the house," she said, pointing with her whip to a cottage half hidden among lime-trees. Her voice and face saddened suddenly. "My poor boy!" she said. "It's such a dark cottage to lie ill in! I told the father he ought to lop off the biggest branches and let in God's sun. Do you know what he said? Will Mr. Corry pay for new ones? That was what he said, the brute."

"That was very grasping of him," said Lucia.

"No, it was irony. He hates me for helping Luke. Can you understand such folly? Cutting off his nose to spite his face. And now I must confess why I wanted you to come.

Because it'd do you good, and because I'm a bit afraid of how Willes will receive Brass. Old Willes has the queerest ideas. I want to be there before—but I'm not!" She broke off with a cry, and a cut at the pony. A big yellow motor was standing a yard or two from the cottage-gate. Beside it waited the inevitable, uninteresting chauffeur, and also a tall, dark young man in a "Cavendish" motor coat.

"I am Mrs Corry," began Mary in her headlong way, "who wrote about your coming. I am sorry we were late. But why didn't you go into the house?"

The young man smiled. "You must ask the old gentleman inside with the gun."

"With the gun? Woa, Beauty!"

"There's an old gentleman inside with a gun. He's drawn a chalk line across the garden-path—you can see it from here—and he states frankly that he intends to shoot the first surgeon who crosses it. So I, being a surgeon, stopped on this side."

"It's the father!" exclaimed Mrs Corry in despair. "Oh, my dear, he has the oddest religion!"

The young man laughed, such a delighted, delightful laugh that the two women laughed to hear it.

"No, no, it's most dreadfully sad," remonstrated Mary Corry. "Oh, I do feel so utterly miserable, I wish you'd laugh again!"

The young doctor willingly complied, but with less success. As the ladies advanced to reconnoiter by the gate, the door opened and an old man, upright, with a long grey beard appeared, on the threshold. There was nothing very remarkable about him, except that he carried a gun. His dress was that of a superannuated game-keeper, with faded leggings, and, indeed, he had been an under something of the kind with a gentleman in Wales, where he had married the widow of the local public house, which his principles unfortunately forbade his keeping on. He had therefore advertised in the *Primitive Sentinel* for a cottage with religious advantages and a bit of garden: the result was his present "Mount Zion."

"Nobody's going to touch your son's legs without your leave!"

called out Mary Corry, waving a conciliatory parasol in the middle of the road.

"They'd better not," came the old man's clear reply, "or some of 'em perhaps won't go home on their own."

Unconsciously the young doctor glanced down at his, which were very straight and shapely. A checked chuckle sounded from the pony's head—*i.e.* from the crabbed old coachman who stood there.

"But you'll let us in to talk the matter over?" cried Lucia, who was most anxious to help and to reach a chair.

"There's three o' you to one," came back the quite unexpected answer, "but the Lord's on my side!"

"Well, we can't fight against those odds anyway!" said the young man, not irreverently. "So you see, you can safely let the ladies in."

"I'll let you in—the *three* of you—for Mrs. Lomas's sake, if that young man'll take off that disguise of his, so I can see what murderous weapons he's hiding under its skirts!" Now, it must be admitted that the "Cavendish," even when unbuttoned and thrown back, as it now was, makes a man look less like a human being than anything else, short of the pantomime.

Mary Corry screamed with merriment as she skipped through the little gate. "There, that's my reward," she cried, "for all my devotion! He lets us in for Mrs Lomas's sake!"

The young doctor glanced up: his eyes showed a passing tinge of interest in the taller woman, the handsome one, with the flushed and friendly face. "Now, let's get to the patient at once," he said, divested of his outer garment. "It's his pain that really matters, not little oddities and quiddities of ours—eh?"

Willes grunted, as the two men went into the other chamber with Mary. Lucia, looking round the scrupulously neat, but severe apartment, noted how gloomy it was, yet still darker was the inner haze, from whence issued low voices and a stifled moan. A fat woman sat in a corner of the front room, her face on her hands, weeping. Lucia sank down beside her, wondering whether she had thus sat weeping, ever since the terrible thing

befell her, whether she would weep on for ever! Did some people take their great misfortune and swamp it—or perhaps float it more lightly along with them?—by means of long torrents of tears?

The room was an odd one to inhabit. Great blood-red texts hung all over it, warnings of doom, with pictures of the Broad Road to Hell, the Drunkards' End and other similar subjects: not a word of mercy or of hope. The weeping woman, when Lucia laid a timid hand upon her knee, looked swiftly up.

"Don't touch me," she said. "It's my doing. I'm the woman that's drunk with the blood of the saints!"

"Hush! Think what you're saying," pleaded Lucia, shocked.

"Think! I never stop thinking—night or day. He's right—my man is; 'tis the Lord's judgments on me for not listening to His voice. Look yonder," she pointed to the wall—"whose damnation is just"—'their damnation slumbereth not.'" She rose to her feet. "Damnation!" she shrieked.

"Mother!" responded a stifled cry from the farther darkness.

"Oh, hush, for his sake!" begged Lucia, trembling.

The fat woman sank heavily into the chair again. "'Tis the drink," she said in a burst of confession. "I got the trick of it in my public-house days, and I can't give it up! Willes knew of it, when he took me, but he said, and he says still, that he and the Lord'll bring me out!" She shuddered from head to foot. "The Lord's ways are terrible," she said. "But the Bible tells us that!" The red-hot texts glared opposite them.

"*Our God is a Consuming Fire.*" "*It is a Fearful Thing to Fall into the Hands of the Living God.*"

"It will have to be done," said the young surgeon, issuing out of the darkness; he spoke in a decided but not an unfeeling tone. "Better say to-morrow: I know that will suit."

"You can cut off my boy's two legs," said Willes, dreamily. "Can you make him others? I can cut off legs. But I kills my pigs first."

"We can make him others—of a kind," said the surgeon as cheerily as he was able.

"You!" Willes turned suddenly; the woman stopped weeping.

"Stumps! Legs! Like that table there! You make *legs*? The Lord forgive you for mocking Him in the greatest of His works."

"Well, that's true enough, if you put it like that," assented the surgeon heartily. "All the same, if we don't amputate soon, that boy of yours will die."

"Let him die!" replied Willes in tones he vainly tried to steady. "Better a pair of wings for him in heaven than a pair of your legs on earth!"

"Not die!" hissed the woman in the corner, under choking sobs. "Not die! Oh, my God, not die!"

Her husband bent towards her with lean arm outstretched. "No, Luke won't die," he spoke under his breath. "The Lord has given him to you and me for a testimony. He'll live in your sight day by day, a helpless cripple. You'll *see* him. Oh, the Lord'll get *at* you yet, mistress! He loves yer too well to let yer go!" There was a moment's silence but for the woman's miserable weeping.

"My husband'll get you the very nicest shape from Paris," put in Mary Corry's shrill voice. "With aluminium springs."

The game-keeper, who stood gazing with rough pity at his wife, did not appear to hear her. "P'raps you're right, doctor," he began. "We never had a doctor in this house before, not when the boy was born. The Lord has allus helped us through, ma'am,—Mrs Lomas. But amputate his limbs, if the Lord will it. Amputate his limbs for a sign!"

"Father!" called the weak voice from the dark room. "Father!"

Willes stumbled though the door and, returning, beckoned. "He wants the doctor, and the kind ladies as well, he says."

The white face on the pillow, worn with exhaustion, drawn by pain, was that of a lad by nature florid and healthy. The boy lay back, speaking with faint distinctness, his gaze fixed on the little group by the door.

"Father, what does the surgeon want to do to my legs?" The father sought words for his answer.

"Father, don't let 'em cut off my legs. That lady with the kind face is Mrs. Lomas, ain't she, father? Oh, ma'am, don't let the other lady cut off my legs."

"Help us if you can!" said the young surgeon, in an undertone, swiftly.

"What can I say?" exclaimed Lucia. "Perhaps if I were alone with him——" Before she got further, the doctor had closed the door on her. She stood irresolute for a moment, then she knelt by the bedside. "My poor boy, won't you trust to the doctor to do only what can't be avoided?"

"The Lord's allus stuck by us," interrupted Luke, staring with dilated eyes. "It'd be a shabby thing in us not to trust Him now. He'll pull me through, ma'am. It'd be a shabby—my head's going: promise, ma'am."

"But, Luke, you must ask God to bless the operation."

"I can do better than that, ma'am, I can ask the Lord to mend them legs. Promise quick you won't let the lady—the Lord'll heal me, and then mother'll see He can heal all things: nothing's too hard for—— Mother'll see!" He grew unconscious. Mary opened the door. "Come away," she said. "There's no talking to this man."

"Madam," the game-keeper's voice made answer, "the jellies and potted lobsters and things are all in that cupboard there! The doctor said Luke mightn't touch 'em. I'll carry them back to your carriage, with your leave." The young doctor stood watching him with earnest and friendly eyes.

"You are ungrateful," said Mary, "and also extremely ignorant. But I shan't let you murder my boy." She stalked to the door. "I shall send you the police." She stalked out.

The young man had been writing rapidly across a slip of paper: he now laid it on the table. "If you change your mind presently," he said, "telegraph! You will find us quite willing to do as I have written. It need cost you nothing." He hesitated. "If you *don't*," he said slowly, "your son will die in agony; you may be absolutely certain of that——" and he also went out. Lucia, following, yearned to speak some word of comfort or advice.

"Would you really dare——?" she commenced, faltering.

Willes stopped her with a gesture. "I dare," he said gently. "The boy shall do as he thinks best. Don't *you* dare, ma'am? You're rich and a fine lady and have no troubles that I knows on and your ways to the poor is all goodness and kindness, but oh, ma'am, how I pities you,—for the troubles comes!—oh, they comes!—if you don't dare to trust the Lord in them!"

"Are you coming?" called Mary Corry.

The man checked his appeal: the woman threw herself forward; "Pray for us!" she exclaimed, joining her hands in her intensity. "Pray! Ask the parson to pray—Willes is wrong about parsons! If the Lord can cure Luke, why, perhaps he can cure me! Take the horrible texts away, Willes! They're not true. God is—God is——"

"God is love," said Lucia and, bending to the tortured, bloated face, she did a thing she never remembered to have done before in her timid visits to the neighboring poor; she kissed the woman's cheek.

CHAPTER X

AT last!" said Mary Corry, unnecessarily flicking the impatient pony. "I solemnly promised to have tea with my sister. Hurry up!"

"Oh, I can't go any further, Mary: I really can't. You must take me home."

"But I *can't* take you home first: how can I? Why, it's in the opposite direction! Afterwards——"

The young doctor, who had been attentively watching Mrs. Lomas, intervened. "I go back by the way you came," he said. "My motor——"

Mary Corry clapped her hands, regardless of the irate pony's mouth.

"The very thing!" she cried, "it's only a few minutes by motor!" She had already forgotten, nor would she have regarded, her dear friend's foolish fancy about "vibration." Lucia found herself gliding beneath the trees by the doctor's side; he was not quite so young, she now observed, as she had at first imagined, this famous Dr. Brass: he might be some half a dozen years older than she was. Still, how young that was for such a reputation! Perhaps all great surgeons had an early success, while their hands were yet steady!

"Are you sure you ought to do this sort of thing?" asked her companion suddenly.

"Oh, yours is such a beautifully smooth motor!"

"It is a nice one," he admitted, pleased, "but I meant the going about exhausting yourself and getting emotions."

"I could not leave my friend to endure her emotions alone."

"There are emotions and emotions," he replied enigmatically.

"And how do you know I am exhausted?" She fixed her eyes wide.

He smiled, very slightly, just somewhere about the corners of his lips. "You mustn't do it," he said, "I am a stranger, and I know I've no right to interfere. But you mustn't do it."

"How I envy those people!" she burst out impetuously. "If they can accept life as it comes to them, so, surely, can I!"

"There is a difference," he answered, evidently desirous to keep silent while impelled to speak. "The limbs will mortify; the lad will suffer tortures for a day or two; then he'll die, and there's an end of it. You——"

"Well?"

"You won't die."

"How can you know anything of my case?" she said annoyed, and then still more vexed to note she was already talking of her "case," she who had always laughed at all her sickness—discussing friends and their fad-doctors—and food-fads.

"You are quite right: I *am* impertinent," he answered, speaking more easily, "but any one can see you are in delicate health. Nervous breakdown must be stopped—mind that!—or it goes on for ever and ever."

She shivered in the warm sunshine. The last syllables seemed to hang around them with the weight of a prophesy.

"Do you know Dr. Russett?" she asked. "Is he a colleague of yours?"

"He is my master," replied the young doctor. "He is the greatest authority living on nervous weakness. Go to him and do what he says."

"And do you happen to have heard of a Swiss Dr. Vouvray?"

"Certainly. He works wonders."

"So much easier to be cured by God!" she said under her breath. The motor was rushing up the avenue: had he heard her?—in no case would there be opportunity, or cause, for reply. She blushed. He answered nothing: only, as he helped her out, he insisted: "Vouvray is a marvelous doctor. I feel sure he will cure you."

"If I go to him, I shall always remember your advice," she replied. In alighting she noticed there was an "R," not a "B," on the panel: yet it seemed to her he had spoken of the motor as his own. She turned, pondering over this, to the steps.

"Were you waiting to speak to me, Busk?" Poor Busk, as the "motor-thing" receded, had popped out in his own peculiarly alarming manner, from behind a clump of pink and white weigelia.

"If it isn't making too bold, then I was, ma'am," said Busk, apologetic and persistent, as usual.

"It wouldn't do another time, would it?" pleaded Lucia; but already Busk had uttered a permissive whistle, and another individual had come bounding from behind the weigalias. "What is it?" asked Lucia, from the nearest seat in the twilight of the entrance-hall—away, at any rate, from the glare outside. Next to Busk stood a wiry, little, faded, grey man, with ferrety eyes.

"Well, ma'am, it's just this: I've been and taken a liberty!"—since when, O Busk, didst thou realize such a contingency?—"It's just this, ma'am: here's my cousin: he cures everything!" The words came out in a burst of fervor, all faith, hope and love. The old man took out his red handkerchief and wiped his face. The greatest of these was love.

"You've heard of him, ma'am, Thomas Priest, the Chillingford bird-fancier—he lives t'other side the river: Miss Monck, she knows him well—you must 'a heard of him?" Lucia shook her head. Busk lifted a gnarled hand in amazement, as he turned, in wild appeal to the faded man. "Never heard o' you!" he gasped. The grey man nodded gloomily.

"Why, ma'am, he cures everything. He cured my own nephew's baby o' warts in its, beggin' your pardon, stomach—didn't you, Tom Priest?—and he cured my own brother's cow o' the staggers—didn't you, Tom Priest?—and if you was more familiar with cows, ma'am, you'd know staggers is a thing that no cow-doctor can cure!"

"I know—with horses," said Lucia timidly.

"Horses isn't cows by a long way, ma'am," said Busk (the

sort of sentence dear to Timothy's philosophic heart). "Tom Priest said a few words over that cow, and he cured her instanter. Didn't you, Tom Priest?"—The grey man nodded each time—"and the vet said that nothing could cure the baby. I mean the cow, did the doctor." He was trembling with such agitation that he couldn't find his words, this man who invariably spoke in pauses, listening while he talked. So now, with a deep breath he said: "Weh-hell!"

"Tell me about it," she said gently, and Busk told the not uncommon tale of the country-side exorcist, who speaks charms—ay, and gives them. "It mayn't stand to reason," said Busk, waxing calmer in argument, "But, then, I asks you: does medicine? 'The medicines I give,' says our doctor here, 'is mainly vegetable.' So, 'Doctor,' says I, 'asking your pardon, what would yer be pleased to call this vegetable?' He couldn't tell, and it was just common parsley. Couldn't tell, ma'am, yet his vegetables helps! See that, Tom Priest!" The crooked old man jerked his body back with a click, as if he were clinching something at the bottom of his spine. "And Tom stops a horse's bleeding—or a boy's—I saw him! But you won't tell us how you do it, Tom."

"I can't," said Busk's cousin, in a sepulchral voice.

"So I thought you might try, ma'am, seeing how sorry we all are. I shouldn't 'a done it but for Sarah's urging. Wasn't it last February that I was going to the dentist's at Chillingford to have a tooth out? And I happened on Tom Priest here in the High Street and he just touched it—now didn't you, Tom?—and mumbled over me and took it away."

"The tooth?" said Lucia.

"No, the ache, ma'am."

"I hope, Mr. Priest, you will cure Sarah!"

"I hope I may, ma'am," said the faded man, so humbly that he gained her heart.

"If you'd just let him touch you, ma'am, and say the words——"

But she rose, shrinking away. "I cannot," she said. Her humiliation was heavy upon her.

The old man bent double, stretched out his thin hands to her, as she slowly mounted the staircase, leaving the two figures in the dimness by the door. "We want to see you better, ma'am; we can't bear to think of your going away from us——"

"I cannot! I cannot!" sobbed Lucia. She crept away into her own room and locked the door.

"'Tis for good," said Busk to Tom Priest. "She'll leave us, and she won't come back again, and master'll sell the place. Yes, I'll pay your third return, as I wrote yer I would. She thinks y're of the devil, as if any man could be of the devil with such a name as yours! Never mind, Tom Priest: the fancies of the rich is the fates of the poor. Weh-hell!"

To Lucia, unable, so she felt, to call either God or Devil to her aid, as simpler souls could do, to Lucia came a desolation that left her lying prone. Above her bed hung a great, white, empty cross, luminous in the darkness: she lifted her vain hands to it, her silence crying out. So often superstition saves the souls that have not faith—she had neither. "All I need is strength," she prayed, "I am only weak—so weak." And she thought of those who heal toothache by a mumbled charm and (of those who trust Almighty God to restore a shattered limb.

When she heard her husband's dog-cart, she went to the stair-head. There are things which are better said in a lobby than in a room.

"Your gardenia is on the hall-table," she began. "I'm afraid I must ask you to take it. And—Henry—you were right—I was wrong—I had better go away to Switzerland. I can go alone, dear: it needn't be for long. I must do what the doctors say."

CHAPTER XI

MRS. BLANDREY traveled with the Lomases as far as Basle. She was on her way to stay with some Riviera acquaintances in Hungary, who had a Castle in that country and shot foxes.

"Don't be ridiculous, Henry!" said Mrs Blandrey. "What do I care what men shoot as long as they are happy afterwards over their luncheon? Count Screzschtschy is a delightful man, Lucia: I pronounce it 'Screechy,' and you see what a charming man he must be, for he tells me I say it right—and the Countess has the loveliest taper fingers. One of my reasons for going to stay with them is that I hope to get to know her so well that I can ask her about her manicure. There's another reason which I shan't tell you, because you wouldn't approve. Nowadays the only possible *modus vivendi* (did I get that right, Henry?) between parents and children is for the parents not to tell the children what the children wouldn't care to hear. Poor Harry quarreled with his father, because his father said I had reddish hair. So unnecessary. Well, he said 'carroty,' carrots are reddish. Who is the artist, at Venice, Lucia, whose women have such lovely carroty hair?"

"Titian, mother."

"Exactly. But poor Harry had never heard of Titian. I must admit, Harry's father described me as 'carrots and a turn-up'—amazingly vulgar in a man of his rank!" Mrs. Blandrey laughed. Lomas, who had remained very taciturn during the journey, while Lucia lay mostly motionless, invited his mother-in-law to take a stroll on the little German platform. "*Zehn Minuten Aufenthalt!*" Mrs. Blandrey looked, with lifted nose,

on the dull-brown building and the pancake-capped officials. But she was easily amiable. She got out.

"I wanted to ask you—" began Henry nervously. "By-the-by, will you have a cup of coffee?" He stopped in front of an uninviting table with a brown urn and slops.

"No, thank you. I might almost ask *you*, Henry, if you wanted to poison your mother-in-law?"

The pleasantry seemed to him in the very poorest taste, but, then, he was not unaccustomed to non-appreciation of Mrs. Blandrey's humor: perhaps he was fastidious. In any case she was not making his next remark easier for him. The remark, to a man of his mind, was far from easy.

"I was going to ask you," he stammered, "whether you would very greatly mind coming back to Lucia at this Swiss place—presently—while I settle things at home?" Mrs. Blandrey was standing gazing with amusement at a blood-red socialist cartoon displayed against the bookstall. But she turned sharply. "What you ask is quite impossible. You forget the Screechies!"

"I thought you might explain to them," ventured Henry. "Of course I knew you couldn't stay long, so I came. But, you see, I *must* go back for a couple of weeks, at any rate, to see about the sale of Beechlands."

"Come back all the way from Hungary? I don't believe you know where Hungary is! Nor—really—do I. But Cook does. For I asked him before starting."

"That is why I began about it now. I thought, perhaps, you might write to these people from Basle." He picked out his sentences with great hesitation: somehow he had always managed carefully to avoid asking her for a favor before. He looked thoroughly uncomfortable in his unwonted check traveling coat and foolish cap, in the chilly grey morning light. "Night-traveling doesn't suit him," thought Mrs. Blandrey. He was the sort of age when a man must make his appearance, clean-shaven, with resplendent linen and a dark-blue, white-spotted tie.

"Put off my Hungarian magnates, at the eleventh hour! I never heard of anything so inconsiderate!" Mrs. Blandrey

shrewdly left unemphasized whether this last word referred to herself or to her son-in-law. "I must say, I think all this fuss you are making about Lucia's health an immense mistake. You are paying the penalty, Henry, of having married, in middle-age, so young a wife. You feel fatherly and fussy. I should not have spoken—you know I *never* meddle—had you not appealed to me." Mrs. Blandrey walked with increasing vigor. "You are ruining yourself; you have smashed up your home; you are going to sell Beechlands, and I tell you, Henry Lomas, you are a fool for your pains."

"But the doctors—"

"The doctors! An immense international association for trading on the loss of religious faith by the modern well-to-do! I never dreamed of consulting a doctor for Lucia, except when she was ill."

Dr. Rook had told Lomas that a pathological condition like Lucia's was, in nine cases out of ten, the result of neglect after scarlet-fever, of general hygienic neglect during the years of development. Henry Lomas bit his lips. "Well, then she must just remain alone," he said.

"And far better for her if she is really to rest. Follow my advice and don't take her away to Vouvray at all. Take her to the Beau-rivage at Ouchy, and let her have three weeks of sunshine, good living and grape-cure. I can't do grape-cure: it increases my weight. And then go back home together and take up your work, and let her—what does the man say? Oh, *einsteigen*? How high the step is!"

Henry Lomas went and found the car-conductor and, most temperate of men, he asked that official for a glass of brandy. The brandy was poor stuff, and Lomas liked what little he ate and drank to be first-rate: he had always been extremely cautious about his cellar and his tradespeople. When a much younger man, he found traveling used to upset him. Say what he might about wanting to see Italy, he had always regretted that he couldn't see it at home. Foreign ways were not his ways: while quite willing to appreciate them and thoroughly to enjoy a week in Paris or a month's fishing in Norway, he preferred the habits of his native

land. And he had always detested traveling: hotel-beds, dirty carriages, promiscuous and pretentious meals. He had braced himself up all night to this brief but momentous conversation with his wife's mother. Her refusal meant far more to him than she knew. Even Lucia had no idea yet what sacrifice her sickness must involve. He had rightly dreaded her refusal to come, had she guessed. Besides, it was far better first to speak to this Dr. Vouvray. He bought a German comic paper and settled himself to study. He thought it a dull paper, for he missed the meaning of the jokes, but the attempt to furbish up his rusty German did him good. Mrs. Blandrey continued to wear an air of vexation, very unusual to her and rather unbecoming. Fortunately she realized that it was unbecoming, as soon as she passed a mirror in the Basle hotel, and so she toned it down. After a prolonged and efficacious toilet, finding Henry occupied with business-correspondence, she descended to the dull and deserted public-rooms of the giant hotel, speculating what on earth she should do with herself in Basle? Did anybody ever spend a day in Basle? A night, possibly. Or a couple of hours at the railway station.

"Yes, somebody did. For, after wandering through a vast red velvet saloon and along twenty feet of green cloth spread with newspapers, she reached, in a most depressed state of mind, a little cosy writing-room, in which a man lay on a chintz sofa, half asleep. He opened his eyes, as she entered, and started to his feet.

"Lucius!" exclaimed Mrs. Blandrey.

"Inevitably," replied the dis- but not visibly per-turbed sleeper, "and unavoidably yes! I must beg of you to pardon me for not being somebody else, but I can't help it."

"I—I was going to write some letters," said Mrs. Blandrey faintly.

"Quite naturally. You see, they have a fire here. I will go and sit out in the cold." Mrs. Blandrey smiled inwardly. It was so like her divorced husband, she thought, that little bit of self-sacrifice, for the whole hotel was over-heated (already, in September!) by steam.

"How amazing!" she gasped.

"That we should meet? You think so? Everybody meets, sooner or later, at Basle."

"Lucia is here, too, with her husband."

He held up his hand, a nervous, deprecating hand, finely shaped, devoid of rings. "Hush," he said "remember our argeement! Lucia was to die to me. Or, I may say: to be born outside me. She is, so to speak, a posthumous child. Does she believe I am dead?"

"Certainly not. I should never allow anybody to be thought dead before they were. How unkind!"

"You were always considerate." Ah, *he* knew she was not inconsiderate, always so considerate, himself.

"How extraordinary!" she repeated, sinking into a seat.

He opened his sleepy eyes at her. "You have a married daughter," he said, "although nobody would think so, to look at you,—and you still consider things extraordinary. I envy you. Every thing is ordinary, and has happened before."

"I suppose that is true," she answered, "but whatever happens to me for the first time I consider new."

"Yes," he said wearily. "Nothing happens to me for the first time. It all seems a memory. The only really new thing will be death."

Mrs. Blandrey began to understand why she had divorced him.

"But I am glad to see you looking so well," he continued more cheerfully. "It is such a long time since we sepa—parted."

"I was a girl," she said, blushing scarlet, "I did it out of pique." Again he held up his hand deprecatingly; he was a long, thin man with delicate features: it was a long, thin hand. "I have always intended to say that much, if ever we met," she hurried on, "and no more. I am quite happy. I enjoy my life. I hope you do."

He smiled gently, a pitiful, ironical smile, such as Mrs. Blandrey's estimate of things was quite incapable of fathoming. "I am glad you enjoy life," he said. "Some people would feel so—incongruous: I mean the attitude wouldn't fit them somehow. And look, how well you wear it!"

"I am going to Hungary," she said proudly, "to stay with a Count Sczezschty. You have traveled so much, have you ever been in Hungary? Cook tells me it is under Austria."

"Cook?" he queried, bewildered. "Oh, you mean the railway-ticket man. You mustn't talk to independent Hungarians of their being under Austria, or you'll get into trouble."

"I meant 'under' from a geographical point of view," she replied. "You go down through Austria to get there. I'm going now. I always liked traveling and, since Lucia's marriage, I have been a great deal alone."

"Ah!" he said. She wondered whether he also had felt solitary during all those long years; she would have rather liked him to do so. He wondered whether she was meditating a fourth marriage. "I hope you will enjoy your stay," he said heartily. "Yes, I have been to Hungary. I saw an election there once. It was great fun for the survivors."

"Dear me, I hope there will be no elections while I am there," she said, alarmed.

"You need not take part in them. You will have a splendid time with your Hungarian friends; their hospitality is lavish. There is nothing I deplore so much as my physical incapacity to go and stay with any one. I have palpitations all night after my arrival, and I have to leave next morning."

"Are you really ill? You never were strong," she said with sudden commiseration.

"I am never ill, thanks. But I have to consider my nerves. It sounds regrettable, but they compel me to contradict nobody, least of all myself. It is physical—you know that—purely physical. It makes me ill to keep anybody from having their own way." He shook his head lazily. "Staying with people consists in your not having your own way, and their not having theirs."

Mrs. Blandrey laughed contentedly; she liked to feel he had deserved divorcing. "As unprincipled as ever," she said.

He shrugged his shoulders (as a Frenchman shrugs them). "You call unprincipled," he said, "having one clear principle

and living up to it. Well, why not? Some people have so many principles, they can always appeal to the one they want."

The truth was she had never got anywhere near his specious philosophy. Nor had he ever sought to enlighten her. Knowing, soon, that all such attempts must be vain.

He picked up his hat. "I am keeping you," he said, "from writing your letters. It is twenty years, do you know, since I last wrote a letter though my solicitor is always pestering me to acknowledge his remittances. Life would be endurable but for the lawyers; they are perpetually showing you how people can cheat."

"Some day you will find yourself beggared," she answered, "you with your large fortune!—such *insouciance* is incredible. Do you mean to say that you will never attend to any business at all?"

"Indeed I do. To other people's. I am always listening to somebody, who is asking me for advice, which of course I never give, and for money which I do."

"I ask you for neither," she could not help saying.

"You are the only woman I knew well that never did. My good sister is always dunning me for her manifold charities: I should have to write and explain, if I didn't send what she asks." He had walked away into the reading-room, then he stopped, took one long step back. "And Lucia?" he said, in an altered voice, all the badinage gone. "I trust she is well?"

"She is well, but not feeling strong. They are going for a change of air to a place in the Vaudois Alps."

"I am glad she is well. What place are they going to? I myself was thinking of—" he stopped.

"Oh, they are going to a doctor called Vouvray." She had settled down to the writing-table; she wrote countless letters to travel-friends all over the world. "I know nothing of the man, and I may say that I disapprove of the whole thing."

"Vouvray of Gringinges-sur-Aulch! Well, he has an immense vogue for the moment! You hear of him everywhere. Just as you did of Schrumpelbaum ten years ago. You remember Schrumpelbaum?"

"Not I," said Mrs. Blandrey trying pens. "I know nothing about doctors. I never had a pain—or fancied I had a pain—in my life."

"I forgot!" he sighed. "Well, the people who fancy they have pains are all talking of Vouvray. All the same, it isn't reassuring to hear that my daughter has been sent to him." He spoke with sudden agitation. "What is really the matter?" he asked more calmly.

"Nothing, I tell you. She is nervous, out of sorts."

"You will not be with them?"

"Certainly not. A sanatorium! No, thank you. I am going—"

"I remember. Tell me, you have kept your promise. Lucia knows nothing about me? She has never seen a portrait of me?"

"She has seen a portrait of you—as you were."

"Ah!" How unkind women could be to him, whose sole creed was never to be unkind to any one.

"I could not help myself," she said, mistaking the "Ah!" "She insisted, the day before her wedding. I have never had the courage to tell Miss Monck."

"You will greatly oblige me by not mentioning this meeting to her," he said. "I—I wish you every happiness."

Mrs. Blandrey remained pensive, her dimpling cheek upon her dimpled hand. She wrote no letters. She preferred to ruminate on her own existence, which exercise is not productive of the furrow she especially dreaded, when it is as placidly performed as with her. She had reached an important stage in her career. Of late she had begun to realize that she was not as young as she used to be. That is a thing we often say, but rarely, and at very long intervals, do we feel it. Mrs. Blandrey had never felt it before. On the contrary, during all her long years of widowhood, she had felt, probably because she was so young a widow and so much a widow, as young as young can be! But now, at about forty-five, she was growing in face, in figure, in general feeling, what the French so well call "*épaisserie*." Dupajoux denied the fact with such intensity of denial that he made her feel very sad. Such sentiment produces the supreme crisis of a life. She realized that,

now or never, she must "arrange," as she herself expressed it, for the future.

Her own predilection would have been to remain as she was and not feel lonely. But this proved impossible; she did feel lonely. She wanted to talk of Lucia, of Harry and Teddy: she always maintained that she would not have troubled her daughter about Harry, if Lucius had not bound her down to such absurd and unnatural silence about himself. It must be admitted that she was not voluble about her own affairs before strangers, as Mary Corry was apt to be. But she had an extravagant fondness for being loved.

She would have re-married long ago (she never came to doubt the feasibility) but she dreaded the ridicule inevitably attached to such a step amongst her own surroundings. She now resolved on a voyage of exploration; she would look up people she had met at Monte Carlo and so on, and see whether uncertain fate might shape itself unexpectedly and pleasantly to a definite novel departure. If it didn't—and she would make no dubious efforts to direct it—why, then, well and good: she would turn her face homewards again and live on, pleasantly, as she had lived before. But you can't expect adventures to come to you at your own fire-side. She was going on from Volônyesz to Lombardy, to the Pini-Pizzatellis, and she would probably winter on the Riviera, which is the cosmopolitan Poultry Show.

She contentedly left Basle (and all it contained) that evening by the night express. She was not satisfied about the so-called "chance" of that meeting with Lucius Monck; had it not seemed too utterly unlike his character, she would have questioned, with irritation, whether he had taken to spying on her?

The brand-new sister, provided, on the departure platform, through Dr. Russett's friendly aid, whilst the totally indifferent Summers passed over, temporarily or not, to Mrs. Blandrey—the brand-new Sister Hilda, remarked that it was a good thing the loquacious lady was going.

"Pray, why?"

"There won't be any talking allowed at Dr. Bouverie's, Mrs. Lom'as-s."

"No talking?"

"Not to speak of, Mrs. Lom'as-s."

"Is it a prison, then? Or a madhouse?"

"It is a sanatorium, Mrs. Lom'as-s. There's a lot of talking in madhouses. You haven't much experience of either?"

"No, indeed."

"Both are admirable institutions for different objects, Mrs. Lom'as-s. But the sanatoriums are, as a rule, quiet."

"Objects, indeed," shuddered Lucia, "I shall like quiet," she felt more foolishly nervous than ever: when Henry came back from a dismal stroll through the dreary town, she pressed his hand.

"I was once here in Basle before, Mrs. Lom'as-s," said Sister Hilda cheerfully: she talked in the (painfully cheerful tone all sisters are taught to adopt.) "I was here for six weeks, and I know the place well." She stood at the hotel window, in the heavy shadows, a pleasing, fair-haired figure in her hospital-dress and great gold cross. "I was sent for all the way to a patient, who had been struck down, on the last day of his holiday trip, by typhoid fever. Very ill he was and lay here all that time. It's extraordinary, Mrs. Lom'as-s, how people mostly catch typhoid away from home. He was a man of about fifty, Mr. Lomas's age and size."

"Did he recover?" questioned Lucia, stroking Rob.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Lom'as-s, he died," said the sister, cheerful still in voice, but with melancholy relish. "And there was such a trouble about the burying! Dr. Russett said you mustn't talk, or I could tell you such a tale!"

Two things Lucia had discovered about Sister Hilda, before they were half an hour together. The first was that she had the exasperating habit of mentioning, and mispronouncing your name in every sentence; the second, that she always remembered the doctor's desires at the moment when they coincided with her own. She could hear a name said right fifty times and mispronounce it fifty-one, she never got beyond "Mrs. Lom'as-s," and "Dr. Bouverie." Not though she saw "Vouvray" placarded all over the place. She had been selected because she "had traveled

abroad" (her trip to Basle) and also because she "spoke French"—she could say "Nong."

"That was the bell for late dinner," she continued with alacrity. "I'll go down now, and I'll tell you about the burying another time. If people knew what a trouble it was abroad, they'd stop and die at home. Not that you're going to die, of course!" Sister Hilda beamed—"Shall I send you up something, Mrs. Lomas, or will you have the waiter and order for yourself? You'll have your diet to-morrow. I dare say it'll be chiefly raw-meat and slops."

Henry Lomas went down and sat with the sister at dinner. He had dressed, a thing nobody else had done. Of course it didn't matter: only he couldn't understand who the sort of people were who didn't dress for dinner. He lounged into the empty billiard-room, and realized that this meant health-travel. Nobody not ill would stay at Basle. On the stairs a timid little lady in black ran up against him. "Ah, excuse me," she piped, "I see so badly." She had dropped her reticule: he stooped to pick it up. "And yet glad enough to see at all," she added, "after having been entirely blind."

"Indeed!" he said, trying to pass. But, small as she was, she succeeded somehow in filling the spacious landing.

"Yes," she said, "I was altogether blind, and unable to move hand or foot, for four years, from nervous exhaustion—but Schrumpelbaum cured me, the great Dr. Schrumpelbaum, you know, at Klöss, near Zurich. *The* great man for nervous exhaustion, Schrumpelbaum."

Henry caught at the bait. "As great as Dr. Vouvray?" he said. The little lady pulled a face. "I know nothing against Dr. Vouvray," she replied, "except—well, well, it's an age of advertisement and commercial enterprise. I dare say he's right, and I believe he *has* had successes, but—dear me!—he takes a long time about them; no, if *I* needed a doctor, but I no longer do, thank God!—I should go straight to Schrumpelbaum at Klöss, near Zurich." She passed Lomas with a little courtesy, nimbly skipping down the stairs. He stood watching her, mechanically

repeating to himself the uncouth syllables she had left behind her. And already he walked down the few steps to the porter's lodge to ask for a pencil and write them down. An Englishman, whom Lomas had noticed at the far end of the dining-room, turned, from getting a light, as Lomas came up, and, with a nod after the little skipping figure, said, straight in Henry's face: "Schrumpelbaum."

"Did she tell you, too?" demanded Henry, amazed, wondering whether everybody was here with a sick wife.

"Blind for four years," said the stranger, his cigarette aglow.

"Unable to move hand or foot," said Henry.

"But entirely cured by Schrumpelbaum," said the stranger.

"It does seem wonderful," said Henry.

"A tout," said the stranger coolly. "A common tout."

"But, excuse me, that seems incredible—"

"Like so much that is true," interrupted Lucius Monck. "She told me these things three years ago, in this very hotel. I thought she would tell you. I had had the unwisdom to say something about nervous exhaustion, the disease of the age—I suppose you were equally rash?"

"No," said Henry, sadly, "but my wife showed enough, without any saying, when we got in here."

Lucius Monck replied slowly: "I am sorry to hear that. Well, it is no business of mine, but I should prefer Dr. Vouvray—have you heard of him?—to Schrumpelbaum. For one thing Vouvray is newer: you will hear of Schrumpelbaum's mistakes: Vouvray has not had the time to make any."

"We might be his first," said Henry, with a sudden cold foreboding he could not have explained.

"No, no: they come later," Lucius turned towards the glass hotel-doors and the shiny street. "Try one of these?" He held out his cigarette case, for Henry had stopped before the sale-table in the hall. "Good night."

"What is that gentleman's name?" inquired Henry of the hall-porter.

"I do not know, sar. He has but spent se day here. Sat is his portmanteau, wis se 'M' on it."

Thoughtfully Henry wandered upstairs, reflecting on the possible touts of Vouvray. Had Rook meant to suggest that Russett was one? Surely not. In his anxiety he lost hold of his temper and, when Lucia asked him what the evening had been like, he honestly answered: "Beastly," to his immediate regret. Rob, hanging over the hotel sofa, as if all his limbs were broken, tried his best to look miserably sympathetic, but when your countenance is born so wretched, people don't care how you look. "An Englishman spoke to me in the hall," said Henry, seeking to compromise, "not at all a bad-looking chap—delicate—distinguished—I should have liked a longer chat with him."

"What a pity you didn't stay downstairs," cried Lucia.

"He didn't want to talk," said Henry, thinking bitterly that the stranger had heard enough of sick wives.

"A young man?"

"My age," said Henry, wincing. "Well, I shall always remember him. He gave me the best cigarette I ever smoked. Made for him in Egypt, I suppose."

"The best cigarette you ever smoked?"

"Literally. You can't think how difficult it is to get good cigarettes."

Lucia remained silent, she was summing up courage to say: "Henry, I'm afraid I shall have to be carried at the station to-morrow. It's such a distance up and down those steps, and something has gone wrong in my limbs through this long journey. I don't think I can move them."

So the stranger saw her carried along the endless Basle platform next morning. "God, she can't walk!" exclaimed Lucius half aloud. "What a beautiful woman! And she cannot walk!" He wondered what his quondam wife called—in the case of other people—"being all right."

"That's the man I was speaking of last night," said Henry. He walked beside his wife's bearers, trying vainly to shield her from the agony of curiosity she was compelled to endure. Lucia, feebly turning, beheld, without recognition, the changed visage of her unknown father. Swiftly averted, he was buying papers at

the bookstall, he didn't know which. Spell-bound he did not dare to move or look around. He started violently when, a few minutes later, a hand was laid on his arm—the hand of the sick-nurse he had seen at the hotel, *their* nurse!

"Excuse me, sir, the sick lady yonder would take it very kindly if she might speak to you for one moment."

"Oh, certainly." Nurse Hilda, observant of sickness, was surprised to see the man go *so* white. "A weak heart," she said to herself reproachfully, "I startled him."

Lucia bent from the carriage window. Her father stood by the door. "I must apologize a thousand times," she said, "I do abjectly. But you gave my husband a cigarette last night, which he said was the finest he ever smoked. He has so few pleasures. Would you mind very much giving me the address?"

Sister Hilda did not like the way the strange man—"old enough to be her father"—gazed at Mrs. Lomas. She hoped Mr. Lomas would not remain too long away about the luggage. Sick people have such curious fancies: not even an immensity of tact (such as Sister Hilda's) can always decide rightly what to accord and what to refuse.

"I'm afraid I can hardly give you the address," said the stranger confusedly. "They don't keep them in stock, you see. But I should gladly send you boxes—they are made for me every few weeks, you understand. I feel sure I could arrange—" He saw Lucia's pale face flush. "Oh, I mean, of course you could pay for them. If you would let me have your address—"

"Thank you, I'm afraid it can't be managed," said Lucia, disappointedly, sinking back. "I am very sorry I ventured to trouble you." Rob looked out of the reserved compartment and growled at the stranger. The latter stepped back, more wretched than he had yet believed he could be.

"I was a fool still to believe there is a limit," he said to himself, as he remained standing on the platform, his two hands full of his jumble of foreign papers. "Poor, poor thing! And I can do nothing for her. Absolutely nothing. Poor, poor thing!"

CHAPTER XII

VERY languidly the landau wound up the deserted road from the small Aulch station to the stationless Gringinges. They had been obliged to put a plank between the seats of the carriage, so that the invalid might lie down. She kept protesting this wasn't necessary: she had borne the journey capitably, she could—but her voice grew so faint that Sister Hilda took the arrangements upon her. "The comfort of having a nurse!" said Lomas, till he found that half of the things the sister had especially undertaken to look after—the air-cushion and so on—had been left in the train. "We are all mortal," said Lucia. That, of course, is true. It applies to the sick. And to the sick-nurses still more.

Sister Hilda sat next to the patient, the heavy bull-dog opposite: Thus Henry, in spite of his wife's vain appeals, had been inevitably lifted to the box. "You get the best view here," he said—and, indeed, you got view, of a restricted kind, in plenty. The desolate road crept on, for miles and miles, between continuous twists of pine-clad mountain-slope, enclosing walls that opened but to close again and once more open, beside a moving current all the way. The calm, early-autumn evening deepened with pale, pellucid blue above the dull masses of blackening verdure. Not a sound arose but the ceaseless water, and the clink of the harness. Occasionally some unknown bird of prey swept slowly in distant heights. Here and there, at intervals of half an hour's long climb, a tiny chalet, perched aloft in a scrap of hay-field visible for miles, accentuated, even more than the far scream of the bird, the wildness and loneliness of the region. "Inhabited?" inquired Lomas of the taciturn driver, when they passed one of

these, a ruin, low down by a curve in the road. The mountaineer, pipe in mouth, nodded an uninterested affirmative. The landau dragged on, slowly rising, hour after hour, curve after curve, further into the recesses of the empty mountains, with the sky growing smaller and darker overhead.

It seemed as if every twist of the tall, green heights, closing almost imperceptibly behind the travelers, formed another prison-wall between them and the world outside. They had left civilization—the whole world of rational existence as known to them hitherto—at the little Aulch village station. The porters who had lifted Lucia into the landau already seemed like a half-forgotten memory of friends. Yet the road was right enough: at the end of all this desolateness lay the place to which they had been forwarded—like chattels—from their own green, cheerful, warmth-surrounded home. When the train jerked itself into temporary repose from long jolts by a tiny platform, an enormous boarding had obscured the sky in front of their compartment window. "*Sanatorium de Peysonnax, Gringinges-sur-Aulch*"—how outlandish it all sounded—"Médécin en Chef le Dr. Vouvray. Quatre médecins adjoints Traitement des maladies de, etc."—the whole Kyrielle of corporeal and mental woes.

"I had no idea one had all that inside one," Lucia had said laughing, at sight of the list.

"We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made, Mrs. Lom'as-s," had been Sister Hilda's prompt reply.

"'Frightfully' would seem the better word," said Henry, but he quailed before the sister's unutterable glance. Two days later she lent Mr. Lomas a little book called "A House not made with Hands," but he had had it before from Miss Ermentrude Monck.

The evening grew colder, duller, blanker, in unalterable grey-ness and bleakness, between those towering ramparts, along that ceaseless stream. Henry had tried to get up a passing interest in the rivulet, he inquired if there was trout in it. The driver did not know. Lucia twice asked the name of some outstanding mountain peak. The driver could not tell.

At last that unconcerned individual lifted up his whip and

pointed. In an open semi-circle, on a plateau against rugged rocks, a long brown building gradually detached itself, a line like a dozen huge châteaux, one against the other, staring down into the valley. "Sanatorium," said the driver. The fact of arriving broke the tension of the journey, with a sudden realization of the horror of it all.

"I think it looks very nice, Mrs. Lom'as-s," said Sister Hilda, with an entirely uncalled for jump on the I.

Lucia acquiesced. Already she had begun telling herself, like so many patient invalids, that, if you can endure all the evils of sickness, you must also try to endure the nurse. It took them half an hour longer to wind upwards to the door. A pleasant-faced, gold-braided *conciierge* came out to them. The whole place had the look of a first-class Swiss ch  let-hotel.

But in the entrance-hall a huge notice stared the new arrivals threateningly in the face. "You are requested not to cough, speak or sneeze in the passages." Sister Hilda sneezed in the lift.

"Nice rooms," said Sister Hilda, sniffing. "I trust you think so, too, Mrs. Lom'as-s?"

"Yes," answered Lucia, her eyes on the far, bleak mountain-masses, thanking God for the soaring peaks and the sight of the sky.

"My room is a cupboard," said Sister Hilda, throwing open a door. "But *that* is good enough for a sister. Our mission—ow!" The padded door, automatically closing as they all did, caught her, with a sudden startle, in the back.

"There is no accommodation at all for you, Henry," exclaimed Lucia, alarmed. "I hope they have not misunderstood——" But already an obsequious man-servant in infirmary dress had announced: "Monsieur le Docteur!"—the Mister Doctor Vouvray—and the Great Head (and Tail) of the establishment came running into the room.

Vouvray was a small man with the rugged head of a lion. Tousled, chap-fallen, with grey, grim, magnanimous eyes. His figure, over which a faded old cloak hung, such as the common people

wear in the Swiss mountains, at once reminded Lucia irresistibly of "Appletree Busk," whose heart-broken farewell offering, by-the-by, had been a tin case with six carefully packed gardenias, forgotten by Sister Hilda at Basle. Lucia, on learning this loss, felt that Providence had tempered the smell to the sick lamb.

"You will miss your flowers here, Henry," she said.

"Yes," said Henry.

"Aha!" said Vouvray, standing in the middle of the room, with an assistant doctor and the attendant behind him. "You come here to be cured? You will be cured. Dr. Russett has written me all about you." Then he began the long, tiresome examination all over again. But the words of medical assertion never miss their effect. The speaker's sincerity was evident. The splendid forehead, with its great bar of thought, was in itself, to all who looked on it, full promise and sufficient hope.

Vouvray sat back, his canny hands upon his clumsy knees, his lion-head uplifted to the mountain.

"Your illness, like those of you all," he said, "is the result of your life. Live differently as you will here, and you will recover!"

The room with its many occupants seemed to be whirling round Lucia, still she found strength to plead.

"But I have always lived such a reasonable life, nothing unusual."

"Just so, just so; we will change all that."

"And my friends, who live like me, aren't ill. My mother——"

"They will become ill in time. They will all die sooner or later." He frowned, in great furrow, as he realized the infelicity of the wording, a frequent thing with him, for he thought too swiftly, caring little how he spoke. "Die prematurely, I mean, of course. If we lived as we should, we should all live to a hundred."

"But I don't want to live to be a hundred," murmured Lucia. Even Lomas egotistically felt there was little need for his young wife to attain such extreme old age.

"I once nursed an old lady of ninety-seven," struck in Sister Hilda, "who lived entirely on mussels, and she'd never have

died, Dr. Bouverie, if she hadn't swallowed a poisonous one. I need hardly say I was out for the day, Mrs. Lom'as-s, it being my uncle's, the alderman's, that I was telling you of——"

Vouvray had raised his great head to the tall sister's fair face with that expression of contemptuous dislike so common in doctors, when they listen to nurses. At this stage he brushed her away:

"The aged," he said, unable to follow her in his broken English, "they have not muscles: they live on the excellence of their inner organs. For you, madam, there is no chance of a hundred. You begin too late. Begin with your babies. But I will make you as old as I can in reason. How old will satisfy you?" he laughed frankly. "Seventy-five?"

"As long as you make me well," said Lucia.

He bent over her, waving them all away, his eyes tender as a woman's.

"Ah, you are all like that," he said, softly, "the good ones! It is for the husband's sake. You shall toboggan with him six months hence on the slopes of Gringings!"

"Six months!" said Lucia's sinking soul. Her lips murmured: "God grant it!"

"So be it. I have no objection," replied Vouvray, matter-of-fact at once. "Meanwhile," he added in French under his breath, "Alphonse Vouvray must see what he can do. Silence for the first fortnight. Not a word but the inevitable. Repose. Dark room. Diet. No meat. I shall arrange all particulars with your special doctor. Would you like a doctor or a doctress?"

"Which is best?" asked the bewildered Lucia.

"A doctress. But all the ladies prefer a doctor." A repeating watch struck in the man's waistcoat-pocket. "Is there anything more? I think not."

"I should like, if he isn't in the way, to keep my dog?" said Lucia timidly. She moved her foot, and Rob, who had been contentedly asleep among shawls, rolled heavily to the floor. Accustomed though he was, in his clumsiness, to tumbles, he suddenly associated the strange gentleman with this one and barked fiercely. The big lion gazed at the bull-dog.

"Impossible," he said, "I grieve to say. I will explain to your husband. You are too tired." The attendant threw open the padded door: the young doctor bowed himself aside: in a babel of barking, a flurry of attempted silencings the great man, solemnly pointing to a white card against the wall, withdrew. The last thing they all saw of him was his long, thin finger pointing to the card:

"The double walls are extra thick. No *reasonable* noise can pierce them."

When the Polish doctress entered, with cropped hair, a kind, whiskered face and spectacles (not at all a bad imitation of a singularly ugly male), the infatuated Rob sealed any fate he may have had left to seal by barking, from fright, still louder. Henry escaped to the doctor's sanctum, summoned to discuss (for Vouvray kept all the strings of his many puppets in his own hands) the question of pounds, shillings, pence.

The sanctum was a large room, three walls and sides of which were heaped up with treasures of modern art: pictures and plaques, right and left, marbles and bronzes in front of them, signed by the greatest names of the day. The middle of the apartment spread widely empty but for a superb, golden Persian carpet with—curious contrast—a medical couch upon it, a couple of Turkish chairs and a large plain writing-table. On the writing-table the portrait of a beautiful woman, and a supremely glorious ivory, some three feet high, in white and brown, by Barillon, a soaring female figure with uplifted arms—Hope!

The entire fourth side was formed by a plate-glass window, with bronze curtains, thrown back. Beside it stood Vouvray, against the desolate immensity, in the distance, of grey granite, grey mist and grey sky.

Lomas glanced from beauty to beauty along the crowded walls. He was not an art-student, but sufficiently an art-lover. His eyes rested on the ivory statuette, and stirred to the depths by its irresistible uprising, in this hour of his tribulation, he smiled to Vouvray:

“‘Hope springs eternal in the human breast!’” he said. “And well it may.”

“Your wife will get better here. There is spinal trouble of long standing. She is a brave woman, your wife!”

“Would she had been less brave!”

“Women are brave: they endure. We men, we—squeak!”

“Do we? I suppose that is true. I never had cause.”

“When it comes, remember not to. Now as to terms? The charge is the same for all, whatever the treatment or whatever the room. Fifty francs per day for the patient, twenty-five for the nurse.”

“And for me!” exclaimed Henry.

“I am sorry to say you cannot remain.”

“Like the dog!” cried the husband bitterly. He added: “Are you afraid of my ‘unreasonable noise’?”

Vouvray moved from the window and sat down by his table. “Consider how I am placed,” he said kindly. “This house, newly built, can hold a hundred. I turn away”—he moved his hand to a pile of letters—“half a dozen a day. To-morrow I expect the Rajah of Rumdoolah. He wished apartments for his suite: I tell him his suite must remain in Aulch. He offered for a salon a hundred francs a day: I say not for two hundred. Can I wrong those who beat at my door?”

“No,” replied Henry, crushed by this evidence.

“I am building two large new houses, each for a hundred and a half. In May they will be ready: then I shall have—what say you?—room to elbow. The expense is enormous—every brick costs four times as much—four—times—as—much as it costs in the valley. But for money I care nothing, except it were to get these”—in a slow half-circle he embraced his many treasures—“and all these were given me by patients whom my system has cured. I, therefore, have no use for money, no use at all. Of *these* I have need: I could not live without them, not breathe. From them I draw my strength.” He threw up his great head—“I need strength.” He went on: “I say these things because I cannot bear you to think, any one to think, I send you away

for money. I live only for my system—my marvelous system! Ah, here you will see wonders! Before you leave, you must talk to Mademoiselle Trouillot!”

“I might stay on as a patient,” said Henry blindly, thinking only of Lucia’s forlorn, white face.

At once Vouvray took his eyes off his pictures. “Lie down on that couch,” he said. In another moment he was thumping and listening. Henry, much concerned with life-insurance, had himself taken out his policy with a company that didn’t examine. The novel ordeal now made him nervous. Why did you have to breathe in that extravagant manner and say “Ah?” What was that odd echo from your breast-bone? Why——?

“Yes, you can stay as a patient,” said Vouvray. He said it cheerily, with congratulation, as he sat down before a big schedule-book on his desk. “It happens that a lady is leaving to-morrow, cured. You must speak to her. To-night I’m afraid you must sleep in a bathroom. The Grand Duke Constantius did it two months ago. He went savage, smashed everything, bent the bath pipes, but it did him a lot of good—the humiliation, even more than my system, but I shall never take a Grand Duke again.”

“You think I am ill?” demanded Henry.

“You? Yes. Not more so, perhaps, than most men of your age who have lived like you.”

“I assure you——” cried Henry, turning scarlet. The doctor waved Henry aside, as he had waved Hilda.

“I dare say you have lived what is called a healthy life. And you see the results! Not fifty-five, and a tendency to arterio-sclerosis!”

“To what?” faltered Henry. If one *had* to be ill, what a name!

“Never even heard of it, you see! Ah, these local doctors! Arterio-sclerosis. Got it all the same.”

“I think I have heard of sclerosis of the liver,” began Henry, feeling sick. “My former coachman——”

Vouvray smiled: “You have got two terms mixed,” he said quickly. “Never mind. You are not as bad as your coachman. With a tendency, any tendency, one is safe in my hands. Your

doctor (who didn't find it) would say it was incurable. But it isn't, with my system. We'll begin to-morrow."

"But I never feel anything," objected Henry. Vouvray again placed a finger on the patient's pulse. "The irregularity is plainly marked," he said. "To-morrow we will try the blood-pressure. Meanwhile, no man can feel his own pulse. You needn't try." The repeater in his pocket sounded. "We shall have you cured in a few weeks, and your wife——" He paused.

"And my wife?"

"Her also, I trust, we shall cure," said Vouvray.

CHAPTER XIII

BEFORE he retired to his bath-bed Henry paid a long visit to Rob in his out-house. That poor fellow lifted to his master a pair of eyes each one of which was an abyss of misery and reproach. Henry was hardened to this look, which Rob as a rule kept for everybody but his mistress, and for her, when she was in disgrace. But the master was also accustomed to feel its entire undeservedness, whilst now he said in a still, small voice: "Rob, you must try to forgive me. I throw myself on your honor. Be generous!" A brisk brown cur was circling in front of the chained Rob, yapping carelessly. What could Henry Lomas, Esquire, of Beechlands (the greatest demi-god living, in Rob's eyes) do to arrest this tawdry insult in a place where he himself was entirely on sufferance, like Rajahs and Grand Dukes?

"See here!" said Vouvray. "See the letters! The Rajah demands for his two tigers that have never left him a day since he was born! Would your wife like to meet a tiger on the stair-case? I guess not. Or my timid little Peruvian a bull-dog? No."

"You wouldn't like to meet a tiger on the stair-case, Lucia?" said Henry.

"No, but Henry"—a twinkle came into her eyes—"how can I, when I'm to remain in my own room?" She added: "I shall be very lonely without the dog." It was her first word of complaint.

"I am going to stay on," he replied.

Her heart gave a glad leap. "Just for the first," she said. "The first week or two!"

The "white night," as the French graphically say, which Henry spent in his bathroom, gave him ample time definitely to review

the situation. The irresistible events of the last week or two had followed each other so quickly, he had been swept on by them but with eyes open, knowing he could turn neither right or left.

And now Mrs. Blandrey had not even made it possible for him, as he had firmly expected, to go back and settle his affairs. He must send in his resignation from here: the other manager, a friendly but envious junior cousin, was writing to propose a sub-manager (the cousin's orphan nephew) for the post. In no case—even had the concern not been a family one—could Henry's nature have endured the idea of prolonged payment for work undone. "One man's breaking is another's making," says Busk, but never with reference to "the Quality."

The house must be offered for sale, privately at first; he must let the fact get known. He simply couldn't keep it on. With the loss of his salary his income sank suddenly to fifteen hundred a year. A week ago it was three to four thousand. Lucia, the child of a wealthy father, had nothing. For Mrs. Blandrey, true to her line of conduct, had informed Monck's solicitors, that Lucia was marrying a wealthy banker and would accept no money from her father. "No, indeed," said Lucia. "Should I take money from my father and nothing else?"

Why, the mere expense of this place would be five pounds a day! There was no choice for them: he must sell his home. Of course other people—his own relations, amused outsiders—would say he could surely have acted differently some way or other. Misery often looks absurd to those not mixed up in it. He loved his wife: she was twenty-two, and the doctor gave her a chance—this one chance—of health!

The Sanatorium of Peysonnax is undeniably a medical delight. The magnificent south-front with its long lines of sun-box balconies gleams all day, a tall stretch of white façade and polished pine-work, in the heat of the mountain-sun. Inside, the arrangements of the corridors and apartments are those of a palace-hotel, treated hygienically. No paper of any kind is allowed on the walls nor, of course, can such atrocities be permitted as hangings or curtains. But each patient's chamber is a "symphony" of

harmonious color-tinted walls, polished parquet, painted furniture: a hundred thousand francs, it is told, have been expended on artistic tiles alone, another hundred thousand on the perfect heating and ventilation, yet another on the baths and the gymnasium. Vouvray could, therefore, assert truly, in spite of his enormous prices, that he cared not to make money. He abhorred what he called the "exploiting of the sick" all over Europe in the ill-kept houses to which they are too frequently forwarded by a system of inter-national inter-medical supply. And the cornerstone of his whole method was the "Return to Nature," the Simple Life in a Palace Hospital, as applied to the extremely rich.

He made Lomas acquainted with the lady who was vacating Number 93: it was part of his plan that his patients should get to know each other: he liked them, now they felt unwell, to realize by mutual discovery of follies, how idiotic was the life hitherto led by all. And, also it was desirable that they should find the absurd things he demanded of them being simultaneously perpetrated by others of their own class. Of associated querulousness he had no fear, perhaps in his self-complacency. Besides, had he not placarded all over his admirably organized establishment: "For the complaints of the patients Dr. Vouvray holds himself responsible"? What can mortal do more?

The lady of Number 93 was a very striking and stylish young American, a millionaire's daughter (inevitably) and engaged to a millionaire's son.

"Oh, yes, he's here, too," she said. "I told him I must break off, if he didn't come. Oh, he's a marvel, is Vouvray! In a day or two you'll talk of nothing else. Like the rest of us. Do you know what I cabled to my fiancé? 'Amos iii. 3.' Is that clear?"

"It could easily be made so," replied Henry.

"Just so. Fortunately Tom's servant had a Bible. Tom has to read his Bible here. Vouvray makes you: he says it does you good, though he's not what we should call in the States a Believer. It's the one single book he allows in the house except his own: 'Was Adam ill?' Have you read 'Was Adam ill?'"

Wasn't it in your bathroom? Well, you'll find it in Number 93: it's all over the place. It's in two parts. 'Was Adam ill before he ate the apple? No. Was Adam ill after he ate the apple? Yes.'"

"Then I presume he eschews apples? Yet I had two with my bread."

"No, no; you don't understand. He thinks they're the natural human food, but Adam was in such a hurry, the apple wasn't ripe. That is the point he wants to prove, you see. It isn't an apple in the English Bible, but I believe it is in the Swiss. But you'll find it all in the book. Cain, of course, he says, *was* ill, because he killed his brother. You remember: his brother disagreed with him. And we're going to build a house on the Hudson and a smaller one at Newport, exactly on Dr. Vouvray's lines—Tom and I are—and we're going to live a healthy life. Tom was in business with his father in New York, but of course he'll have to give that up to live a healthy life."

"Is that absolutely indispensable?"

"Oh, yes, you can't do anything else, if you live a healthy life. You can't think what a relief it is, after all the fuss there's been about 'the simple life,' to understand exactly how to begin. We are having a Swiss architect out, of course, and Swiss workmen. And—and my father wasn't very nice about it—but we're having all the stone—natural stone, you know—sent out from here, because Dr. Vouvray says the texture of the walls is so important—'texture' isn't the right word, but you'll understand—and Dr. Vouvray disapproves of bricks: he says natural man didn't live in bricks but rocks, and, now, that is so logical, isn't it? Everything he says strikes you at once as being so reasonable, so unlike my former doctors, and I've had nineteen. It'll be the most expensive house in America—the Hudson one—which is saying a great deal, as you know—the Vanderbilt mansions'll be nothing to it, in cost, and yet it'll seem quite unimposing to look at, like a Swiss *châlet*—don't you think that's very *distingué*?"

"Very," answered Lomas, "and must we all, when we leave here, dwell in such expensive houses?"

"Well," said the fair American frankly, "we haven't all got the means. Although, of course, only very rich people come here. But Dr. Vouvray is quite sensible. He says if we all lived perfectly healthily, nobody'd die, and the world'd grow too full."

"So you don't expect to die?" Henry could not help saying.

"Well—I guess I'll make a bid to avoid it," replied Miss Loewy. "I'm going back to America as fit as fit, and I'm going to live the healthy life."

"You deserve it," said Henry fervently. For Miss Loewy, having been drawn out into the misty night by the moans of the injured Rob, having hugged that resistant quadruped to her breast and pronounced him "the dearest dear," had, in sheer prodigality of unselfishness, offered to see him three-quarters home. "Leave the poor alone, and be kind to each other, Dr. Vouvray always says," she remarked, "and he's right. Well, I guess your dear Rob's pedigree's every bit as good as mine, and *we* came over with the German *Mayflower*!"

Henry had to quit her rather regretfully, and commence his novitiate. The commencing is always interesting, and there was plenty to do. For one thing, entirely new apparel had to be supplied for him and his wife (Sister Hilda not counting), all-linen underclothing with all-wool, silk or velvet top-clothes. The linen of course porous, the wool woven in some unusual manner, the great charm about it being, that it all felt so uncomfortable underneath whilst looking "quite ordinary" and even smart outside. You meet people in the great world constantly with Vouvray's patent things on, and they don't look odd. Most far prefer this. As a rule, the eccentrics who enjoy appearing in absolutely correct Jaeger or Lahmann or Kneipp belong to the middle classes. Vouvray laughed at the idea of discarding hats or boots. "It is a counsel of perfection," he said, "like bidding us develop the wings of the future or reacquire the tail of the past. The useful, prehensile tail! Its loss is much to be regretted. We should never have lost it, had we not abandoned climbing."

"And the tailless apes?" ventured somebody.

"Are poor imitations of mankind," replied Vouvray. "Now just consider the boon to any man or woman at their desk or their needlework in the summer of a tail, whisking off the flies!" He sighed. "But there are limits," he said, "even to hygienic reaction. We cannot recover the tail." Then somebody laughed at the use of the word "recover," but he had only been two days at Peysonnax.

It was Mademoiselle Trouillot who really initiated Lomas—Lucia being locked up for the next month or two, in blind dark (mattressed outer shutters) and dead silence, with a sister who only talked, when she (the sister) wanted to, and hourly alternate pots of hot milk or cold, which the sister repeatedly forgot or mistook. Mademoiselle Trouillot was the show-patient, not just a frank talker like Miss Loewy: she knew what the whole thing was about. She was a wealthy Swiss spinster of middle-age, whose health had broken down ten years ago over Christian charities in Southern Siberia, and who had traveled round all the therapeutic celebrities of Europe till she finally reached Dr. Vouvray. Most of the patients at Peysonnax had been everywhere else. And it was Mademoiselle Trouillot's unique regret that she had not started eastwards from Geneva, instead of westwards (to Nancy) when she might have begun her circuit of health-seeking where she had now successfully terminated it, at Peysonnax.

"It ought to be flamed across the sky!" she cried, "Go to Vouvray first!" The stars of the good God ought to write it. I should like," said the enthusiastic little lady, "to dip one of yonder hugh pine-tree into Vesuvius and to scrawl across the black vault of heaven: 'O ye poor rich who are sick—Vouvray!'"

"It can't be done," said Henry.

She eyed him quickly. "You know," she continued, altering her tone, "the fundamental truth of his great discovery—he makes no secret of it. 'Of all animals man is most closely allied to the ape. Live as the monkey, and you will regain your lost strength.'"

"It is, undeniably, a truth," said Henry.

Again she glanced at him keenly, but went on.

"Hence his wonderful diet, which seems so strange to the unthinking, of fruit, salad and nuts, largely nuts."

"But the monkeys in the monkey-houses," argued Henry, "eat all sorts of curious things. I myself in my tender youth——"

"And die of them!" exclaimed Euphémie Trouillot triumphantly. "It is not our climate kills them, but our unwisdom and their greediness! Like us humans, they eat—and die!"

"Well," objected Henry, "but men don't think like monkeys."

"Hum!" replied Mademoiselle Trouillot. "But we were speaking of men *and* women. Do not let us particularize. I assure you, Vouvray is right. I am his show patient: I claim the title. He wants me to go, but I won't. 'No,' I tell him, 'I shall stay to my death, and preach to all who come.' Back to nature! Oh, the foolish cry it has been, and all the silly natures I have been sent back to. 'Natures' invented by the system-mongers themselves. But this is the real thing, the real monkey-nature we sprang from and belong to, as we still can see it around us to-day. All the other nature-systems are mere fads: I loathe fads. Don't you?"

"Particularly," said Henry. "I have carefully avoided them hitherto."

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT!" exclaimed Dr. Russett. "Outrageous! Oh, utterly monstrous! Absurd!"

"I suppose it is," replied Jack, rather moodily.

The great Dr. Russett stopped dead on the steps of his expensive house. He had on his motor-cap, and also his "Cavendish." He sought momentary relief from his annoyance by contented contemplation of the big, yellow motor, with the "R" on the panels, by the lamps.

"Such things do not happen," he said incisively, "and if they do, we must believe they didn't."

"But this thing *has* happened," said Jack. "The boy walks."

"A boy walks, of whom Brass—Brass, the greatest surgeon living—said, 'Mortification has already set in!' I refuse to believe it!" Russett actually stamped his foot. "If we believe such a thing as that, what—*what* is to become of the profession?"

"The devil only knows," said Jack.

"So it has not happened," concluded Dr. Russett, and walked into the house.

Jack followed in silence. The father, taking a roll off the hall-table, began to loosen the wrapper of that fine French art-publication *Le Connaisseur*.

"It's bad enough," said the young doctor presently, "when people don't get well as they ought to, but what's to be said, when a man recovers that couldn't?"

Dr. Russett gazed intently, over the half-open scroll in his hand, at his son.

"It's very unsettling," said the son.

"You may thank your stars, young man," replied the father

complacently, "that Brass still went there himself, after sending you. He said exactly the same thing that you did."

Jack flushed. "I got him to go: I expected him to persuade the father. Good Heavens, if he had!"

Dr. Russett laughed. "It wouldn't have been so nice for the boy, but far pleasanter for Brass!"

"Don't, father!"

Dr. Russett spread out the paper. "A fine reproduction of Magazzi!" he said. "The man's too tricky for me, all the same. Those bits of tinfoil stuck into the painting are ridiculous. And, mark my words, some day that man'll go mad."

"Oh, don't, father!"

Dr. Russett threw the paper down. "Whatever's the matter with you?" he demanded.

"I hate to hear you say that of people. You said it of Rübenstrass, the violinist, and of Mrs. Bertram's butler. It comes true."

The handsome Dr. Russett smiled a broad smile of self-approval.

"Ah," he said, "my diagnosis is more accurate than Brass's, eh? I'm not the greatest living neurologist for nothing." He laid his hand on his boy's young shoulder. "Jack, you've no idea what a humbug I am!"

"No, no, no," cried Jack passionately.

"And a good thing, too!" For a moment the father remained sunk in thought. Then he lifted his head. "We are all humbugs," he said quietly. "The whole profession's humbug, and the worst of it is that—till fifty years ago—we didn't know it was! Happy time! Hush!" He looked round in affected alarm. "Don't tell anybody I said that! It's a lie. *Errare humanum*."

"'Tisn't pleasant for Brass." But he smiled, as all his great colleagues were smiling (or would smile), over Brass, and over each other. And as he walked into his private room and threw off his "Cavendish," he repeated with relish, "'Tis exceedingly unpleasant for Brass!"

"Brass can't help it," said Brass's assistant stoutly. "Why do some people heal up, and some don't? Some patients swallow

their ointment, and some, I suppose, the pot it came in. Of both kinds some recover: many die."

"That is very wild talk," said the father with *insouciance*, searching, as he spoke, among his papers for that recipe of a Mexican omelet given him a couple of hours ago by the bishop.

For reply the son broke out with the thing his soul was bursting to say: "It's enough to make one chuck the whole thing!"

"What thing?" asked the father coolly.

"Medical science."

As he turned, tingling with his young resentment, he saw that his mother had entered the room. Mrs Nathanael, who did most of her husband's social work, had been to a New Royal Consumptive Fête, and her portly form was attired in a splendid confusion of green silk and dark lilac "illusion," which formed together a painfully incongruous reality. Her husband, with his delicate sense of the suitable, had long ago abandoned all attempts to mitigate her toilet frenzies, for he had early discovered that the mildest hint at better things but augmented her bewilderment and her irresistible tendency to do worse. He now gazed with a gentle regret at her latest achievement and tried not to reflect whether he was acquainted with women who would rather have died than go out in such garb.

"Was that my son speaking?" exclaimed Mrs Nathanael. "Oh, heaven, was that my son?"

"It was, my Poppet," replied her husband, attempting to turn off the approaching tragedy. But Dr. Russett's Poppet refused to be facetious. She sank down on a groaning couch and began systematically to weep.

"My dear, not so loud! The servants!"

"They'll think it's a patient!" sobbed Mrs. Russett spitefully.

"I never hurt my patients so as to make them howl like that."

"Very well, Nathanael, say at once that I yell!" screamed the lady. "That I shriek! That I bellow! That I roar! I don't know how to behave. I haven't any taste! Nor sense of decency! Even in my crying. When I cry, I blow my nose."

She proceeded to do so. "I'm vulgar. I'm common. I didn't rise when you did!"

Dr. Russett calmly grinned at his spouse. "What's happened at the show to put you out?" he asked.

"Keep your wrong diagnosis for your patients," retorted Mrs. Nat. The felicity of this response restored her equanimity. She dried her eyes and, folding her fat white-gloved hands, she remarked, "That my son should talk of giving up medicine is enough to make Dr. Russett's wife cry!"

"Pooh, he said 'medical science,' not 'medicine.' You're right, Jack. Science, nowadays, is exploded. Look at Vouvray! You might do worse than go and study Vouvray."

"I didn't mean that," said Jack.

"Though Vouvray is a simpleton. Why didn't he put his millionaire patients in cowsheds up yonder, instead of building them a palace? They'd have had far more faith in him, if he'd made them uncomfortable. And Vouvray would have had a fortune in the bank. If I could run a Sanatorium—but that's enough: I can't. I'm too scientific."

Mrs. Nat. glanced from father to son. "What a one for chaff he is, Jack," she said.

"The world's so full of its health nowadays, so afraid for its life, any craze will do, provided it's crazy enough. Ah, well, Jack—you'll find money, anyhow, in the bank. But, if I could have had a Rothschild pottering bare-foot about Wörishofen, while I trotted after him with a piece of black bread, as I believe Father Kneipp did!" He sighed heavily. "Ah, here's the recipe! Now, this omelet must *not* be made with tinned tomatoes. Which things are an abomination. Never mind boy; you'll always find money in the bank!"

"To hear you talk, father! When mother is always telling me how disinterested you are! How you help the poor people for nothing!" Mrs. Nathanael nodded her green and white plumes energetically.

Her husband contemplated her over his heavy gold eyeglass. "She may not know how to dress," he told himself, "but, by

George, she does know how to manage Jack!" Aloud he said:

"Well, well, its a noble profession. Personally, I must admit I prefer wealthy patients to poor. The rich are so much less exacting."

"The rich can be exacting enough," remarked Mrs. Nat, trying to get a sight of the glittering tracings on her shoe-points. "and *that* proud!"

"Aha!—what did the Princess have to say to you at the Fête, my child?"

"The Princess ignored me, Nathanael. Same as if I hadn't been there."

"Indeed? My infallible diagnosis again—eh, Jack?—not like poor Brass's. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ*, Jack. Your son was just telling me, madam, when you came in, that he is disgusted with scientific diagnosis. He's going to make far more money than ever his father did by curing people unscientifically. Hygiene and tricks is what I should advise. Modern. Nothing to cry about, I can assure you, my dear."

"Jack is such a handsome lad, he's bound to make money as a doctor," said Mrs. Nathanael complacently. "He takes after me. And even you, Nat, with your stupendous" (she said "stupendous") "genius owe something to your looks."

"Vouvray's quite a plain man," answered Russett dubiously, "and he makes more money than I do, though I don't believe he keeps it. He's got a 'magnetic eye.' If a man could choose between a magnetic eye and a fine presence"—he accentuated his own—"I should vote for the Eye!"

"You can't complain," answered Mrs. Nat, with returning acerbity. "I don't doubt the Princess'd have looked at *you*."

He came and sat beside her on the settee, whispering, "What did the nasty Princess do to my Poppet? Speak the word, and I'll give the naughty Princess a powder that'll twist her haughty figure like a screw."

"I don't care. She wouldn't know," said Mrs. Nat.

Russett looked rueful. "No, I should have to tell her it was for her good. But the twist'd be the same."

Mrs. Russett laughed. "Nothing like the same!" she said. "Oh, Nat, you don't really know women, though you are such a lady's man." She slapped her hands down pettishly upon her green silk lap. And her eyes, following her hands, she saw the ruby bracelet of his giving, and so smiled up at him once more.

"Now you're nice again," she said, "I'll tell you both something that'll please you." Jack stood gazing affectionately at this emerald and mauve splendor that was "mother."

"The Lomas's place is for sale!"

"The Lomas's!" cried father and son.

"Yes, a lady told me at the bazar, who seemed to know all about the Lomases. Not in the market, but he can't keep it up. So I remembered you were full of the place, when you came back from those people, said it would be just the thing for Jack's sana——"

"You didn't tell her all that?" interrupted the doctor.

Mrs. Nat vouchsafed him a scornful smile. "So I brought Scragge along with me," she continued. "He's waiting."

"Scragge?" Dr. Russett ran to the door. "Here, Scragge!"

An individual appeared whom Russett used to call his "lawyer." He was not that, but a discharged solicitor's clerk, with a promiscuous little agency of his own, the sort of man you took if you wanted a dun—for others.

"Mrs Lomas is no better as yet," cackled Isabella.

"Did any one expect her to be?" replied Russett, vexed. "She won't be better for many a year, if ever. Scragge!"

"Well!" said Scragge, who was a meager individual with a conciliatory attitude and a calmly insolent tone.

"Do you know of this business?"

"What about?" said Scragge, kicking together his big feet.

"A place for sale—Beechlands, or Beechhill, near Chillingford?"

"Yes, I do. It's my business to know about places. Beechlands."

"What's it worth?"

"Say nine thousand."

"Jack, it'd be the very thing. I thought so at the time."

The son was diligently picking out the carpet pattern with his boot-toe.

"We should add two wings. Did you know it was for sale, Scragge?"

"I did," replied Scragge, who would always have said that.

"Then why didn't you tell me?"

"I'll send you a list to-morrow of all the places I ever heard of as might be for sale."

Jack flashed a quick look at the man. Scragge only kicked his feet. Jack knew nothing of the creature's business with his parents, but he instinctively loathed him. The agent's chief occupation was squeezing the hapless tenants of uninhabitable houses for Dr. Russett's ever-swelling rents.

"We'll offer six," said Russett, energetically. "He'll take seven. When a man can't keep up a place, he brazens it out for a month or two and then collapses."

Scragge nodded meditative approval. Everybody was silent, thinking it out.

"But, father——" began Jack suddenly, and stopped.

"Well, my boy?"

"Don't you think you might offer nine?"

Mr. Scragge rapidly brought down his pale eyes from their frequent resting-place, the ceiling.

"Stuff and nonsense, Jack," said Mrs. Nat, nervously twisting the ruby bracelet.

"Is it a joke? I don't see it," remarked Russett, taking up his engagement-book.

"I only meant that—that——" Jack struggled on, standing in the middle of the room, feeling callous, "people might say, might *lie*, that father—you see, he sent Mrs. Lomas away to Switzerland——"

"I knew you meant that, you booby. Hold your tongue," cried Mrs. Nat.

"Quite so," interposed Dr. Russett majestically, pencil in hand. "As you say, people will see how right it is *I* should be anxious to help them. And I *will* help them—Scragge!"

"Dr. Russett?"

"Attend to me, please! Have you made an estimate, a proper estimate?"

"Of course not, Dr. Russett," said Scragge with an extra, angry kick.

"Then what do you, a man of business (which I am not) mean by loose talk about thousands? I am surprised at you, Scragge. Don't mention sums till you can account for them. Did you say nine thousand?"

"I might have meant eight," said Scragge sullenly, with vain avoidings of the doctor's eye.

"Or nineteen? Such talk is absurd. Bring me a proper estimate to-morrow. Find out at once about the acreage. Do you know about the acreage?"

"I should say there was——"

"Say? Find out! You're not as good a man as I thought, Scragge. I saw the place. I looked at it. I'm not a man of business, but I valued it at seven." He turned to his son. "Well, Jack?" he said, "what were you saying?"

"Mother understood," answered Jack. "She knows I believe in you absolutely. So do you, father."

"Hang you, you do, do you?" burst out Russett (like gunpowder). He checked himself. "I'm sure I'm much obliged to you" (a sort of sour jam).

"I know *you* don't care a bit about money," continued Jack. "You'd *give* it them." Scragge kicked such a kick he almost upset himself.

"I believe you think I'm made of gold," said Russett crossly.

"His heart is, Jack," put in Mrs. Russett from the settee.

"I know it is," replied Jack enthusiastically, shamefaced, in hot retreat.

Russett was glad to let him go. "Get to your work, Scragge,"

commanded the doctor. "Isabella, I shall have to speak to that boy once for all!"

"No, no, Nat!" implored Mrs. Nat alarmed.

Her husband sighed heavily. "It's easy to be a humbug to the whole world," he said, "but not, not to your only son! I can't keep it up, Isabella: I'm not as young as I was. Some day I shall say a lot of things I don't want to say—to my son!"

CHAPTER XV

THERE was no earthly reason for Jack Russett to go and see Luke Willes again. None but his evil fate, beckoning him on to final, most un-Russetty—ruin. Brass, whose assistant he had been during the last year of his singularly complete medical training, preferred the subject of the non-amputated leg to be left unmentioned in his presence. For Jack himself it would have been better to stay away. Most young men, when they first begin to practice medicine, pass, if of the right sort, through a period of despondency and disgust. Then they pick up again and bravely blunder on. Jack Russett, accustomed from childhood to think his father infallible, naturally deemed his father's science infallible, too. It was a painful pleasure to watch Luke staggering about. It was also a pleasure, as yet unrealized, to await Mrs. Corry's frequent visits and inquire after Mrs. Corry's friend.

"No better, I hear," said Mary Corry. "Luke, I've brought a new doctor to see you. Don't shake your head at me, Willes. I like doctors to see him. He's a show!"

"Ah, but that's true!" cried old Willes. "He's a testimony! Luke, your mother knows that. She's down on 'er marrer-bones screamin' for mercy"—and, indeed, a succession of shrieks resounded from the other side of the passage. They formed a hideous contrast with the noise made by the sickly, lanky youth, who, as he hopped about on his crutches, squeaked: "Hallelujahs" and "The Lord be praised."

"See that lad there, sir," said the father, his enraptured eyes upon his son, "and say 'the Lord be praised!'"

"With all my heart," replied Dr. Rook, for it was he that

Mary had brought. "I'm glad when I cure a man," continued the doctor, "and I'm glad when something else cures him."

Old Willes rose and pointed to the blood-red texts. "You're an old man like me," he said. "Don't blasphemel!"

"Good Heavens, I didn't intend to!"

"And don't swear! You said 'thing.' 'Twas no 'thing' cured our Luke!"

"Lord be praised!" cried Luke, skipping to the door. A yell came from the woman on the other side.

"Willes," said Mary Corry, "you belong to the Christains that say 'don't.'"

"Well they may in a world of sin," replied old Willes.

"I prefer those who say 'do,'" objected Mary, watching "her boy." "Luke, I've got news for you. My husband says I may get you a motor-cycle. For, of course, you'll never be able to pedal again."

The shrieks had crossed the little hall; the woman had thrown open the door. "Luke!" she cried. "The Lord can make you pedal! The Lord can make you pedal, Luke!" The boy stood against the opposite wall, gasping, on his crutches. Jack would have saved him from falling. "I—can—stand," gasped the boy. Over his head flamed the letters: "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" "Escape!" shrieked the woman, whose face was fiery. "Escape! Don't take the lady's cycle, Luke! Don't let him take it, master! Let's have faith! Faith! When I see you pedalling past this house, Luke, *then* I'll know the Lord'll help me out!"

"Woman!" exclaimed Willes, gaunt, with prophetic finger, "yer can't make compacts with the Almighty!"

"Seventy times seven!" cried the woman. "I ain't been drunk seventy times seven. I've counted and counted often. Seventy times seven is four hundred and nine!"

"Four hundred and ninety," said the irrepressible Mary Corry.

The woman stared. "So it is," she said. Her face brightened. "The Lord be praised," she said, "so it is!"

Willes stood looking her through and through: she quailed before him. "What's the road paved with?" he demanded and pointed to the picture. He drew nearer as if to grasp her arm: she broke away to the door, crying:

"The Lord can make him pedall!"

"Do you think he can, Doctor Rook?" questioned Mary Corry, puckering her pretty face.

"Better wait a bit to get the cycle," was the diplomatic reply.

"I believe you are laughing at me," said Mary.

"No, he's laughing at the Lord," said grim old Willes.

"God forbid," said with quite unexpected fervor, Dr. Rook. Jack from his quietly observant corner looked at the dear old man, and, like everybody, loved him. Dr. Rook spoke, with his silvery beard making a bright shine about his kindly face, to the dark figure cowering by the gloomy hearth. "We doctors know so little, and we see so much: who are we to do without God Almighty? No one needs Him more than we."

"Now *I*," said Mary Corry, "believe in Christian Science. I only heard of it last week from a friend who has cured herself, and so I know it's true. Do you believe in Christian Science, Dr. Rook?"

"Yes," said the Doctor, "when it's science, and when it's Christian." (///)

"Arthur says mine is neither, but he's no judge. Men are brutal. I'm sure you're not brutal" (this with a nod to the attentive Jack). "But of course you doctors can't believe in my Christian Science; there'd be nothing left for you to do. You just go on feeling you're quite well—that's all: any one can do it. Luke can"—a squeak from the gasping figure against the wall—"and if you feel it hard enough, you don't ever die. There's an aged lady in Boston felt it, till she grew younger, and younger and younger——"

"Where did she stop?" cut in Jack.

"I don't know. I should have stopped at nineteen, just before I married Arthur, I tell him. You needn't scowl at *me*, Willes," she had reached the door, "deep things like those I'm

talking of to these gentlemen are altogether beyond you. *No* Christian Science'll make your wife look sober when she's drunk. Come along, Dr. Rook!" The old man grunted. "I always shut him up. He prefers not to answer *me*," said Mary Corry. She little conceived on what Bible text that preference is built up!

Dr. Rook put his hand on the pale boy's shoulder. "Be sure to get better," he said, "by any means, by all. Get rosy. Only don't take patent pills. Or, if you *will* take them, come to me: I'll make them up for you at cost price." Then he walked out of the cottage with Jack, the boy Luke murmuring in their wake: "My pills are prayers, sir, please: I don't need no other," and the father adding some confusion about "*them* not costing a guinea a box."

"Are you a doctor?" said Rook to young Jack outside. "When you're my age, you'll have learnt to be grateful for anything that causes any one to suffer a little less."

"But that's *our* mission," protested Jack.

"So we cut off Luke's legs. No, no, that was a blunder. Blunders will happen in the best regulated professions. On the whole, I do honestly believe that doctors alleviate more suffering than they cause."

"You're sure it's not the other way?" asked Jack with broad irony.

"I try to be. You see, having been a doctor all my life, I try to be sure. But it doesn't really matter, if I've done my best. Do your best."

Old Willes had come after them. "I can't write to foreign parts, ma'am, please, to Mrs. Lomas, and tell her what the Lord has done?"

"Of course, I shall write all about it," said Mary, getting into her victoria. "Don't you like this dark green leather, Dr. Rook? You havn't said anything about it. It had to be newly covered."

Jack Russett stood by the step. "Is Mrs Lomas really no better—no better at all?" he asked earnestly.

"Oh, dear no: she's a great deal worse. I knew she would be. That comes of listening to you doctors! You must feel very oddly about Luke Willes: I wonder you have the courage to come and visit him. Mrs. Lomas ought to have stayed quietly at home and to have thought that she was well. As I really believe she was. And now they want to sell that lovely place of theirs! I met Dr. Russett's wife the other day at a Charity Fête (odious thing!—I mean the Fête) and I frankly told her it was all her husband's fault."

As a result of these experiences Jack Russett arrived at the family dinner-table in a mental condition not calculated to please.

"Too salt again!" exclaimed the head of the house, dropping his soup-spoon with a clang of annoyance.

"Too salt again!" cried the irate epicure louder, Mrs. Nat having pretended not to hear. "Jack, I've decided to send you to Vouvray at once."

"Why can't we add our own salt?" complained Mrs. Nat.

"Because, as I've told you fifty times (only women have *no* palates), added salt does not mix. The woman who invites you to put salt on your plate doesn't know how to eat. I've no doubt, Jack, we can get that house: you can go and talk the matter over with Mr. Lomas himself, and at the same time you can see how a place like Vouvray's is worked. Two birds with one stone. Start to-morrow."

There was a silence whilst Jack gulped down his soup and his mother stroked the ample laces above her ample breast.

"It's the trade of the future," continued the doctor, pouring himself out a glass of "his" sherry (a hundred years old, never wasted on guests). "Operations have been the financial success of the last twenty-five years, but they're getting played out—experience has taught the public that the thyroid gland and the appendix are not as entirely superfluous as was declared by the surgeons who wanted to make fortunes by removing them. People have fled from these ruinous, disastrous cuttings and carvings to homœopathy, faith-healing and rubbish of that kind. You

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remember that dreadful 'Assiette au Beurre' about the surgeons, Isabella? An awful French comic thing, Jack: I didn't show it you, splashed with gore. All the things they sew up by mistake in the victim's insides——"

"Don't, Nathanael!" pleaded Mrs. Nat, helping herself to fish.

"Frightfully witty and true." The doctor rubbed his hands with glee. "But there's a reaction—of course. The twentieth century is going to be the century of nature-treatment, health-foods, and diet, talk, talk about it all. The Sanatorium! You're just in time."

"I'd rather not go," said Jack in a very slow voice.

"Why, pray?" Dr. Russett remained aghast, with uplifted fork.

The one reason that Jack dimly felt surging up in the midst of this sudden surprise was the last thought he could utter to his parents. He wished not to see Mrs. Lomas again. "I would rather not say," he answered hoarsely.

Dr. Russett turned on his butler. "Get out of the room till I ring," he said: he was rough with all inferiors, except when, to patients, he was perfunctorily sweet. He faced his son with an immediate oath: "What the devil do you mean?"

"I'm not fit to become the head of a place like that, father. Don't buy it."

"You'll have Dosel to help you. And *my* advice. I'm going to start you."

"Don't tease your father, Jack," put in Mrs. Nat anxiously.

"Tease" his father! He'd as soon have thought of shouting "Tally ho!" in church!

"You're afraid. You're funkng," said Russett angrily.

"Well, if you like to call it so, I am," blurted out the son. "The hell of the doctor in the hereafter must be finding out his own mistakes."

"It's a long way off," retorted Russett. "Few of us find them out on this side, I'm glad to say. All young doctors go through your phase, Jack! It doesn't last. D—— those legs!"

"Oh, Nathanael!"

"And if you're so afraid of mistakes, you fool, what better berth could you find than a Sanatorium? The patients you get there are the sort that go on living, whatever mistakes you make. Or would you prefer a hospital, you idiot? The urgency ward?"

"Yes. I should," said Jack.

"Don't be silly, Jack," reiterated Mrs. Russett. "You'd better ring. There's cutlets à l'Ambassadress, Nathanael: they can't wait."

Jack looked at his mother, the frizzled and furbelowed Bhégum in scarlet, seeing only the big, throbbing heart that had doated on him and gloated over him for six and twenty years. He got up and rang the bell. "My dinner's spoilt in any case," said Russett, and uttered not another word till he was alone with his wife.

"The stupid boy!" he burst out. "But I whipped him. Serve him right."

Mrs. Nat, in a dressing-jacket, shook her silver-gilt hair-brush solemnly at her lord. "That's where you clever fathers err," she said. "He's not a boy."

"He's a boy in his profession. He's had too much preparation: that's been a mistake of mine. He wanted to see it all, and he's seen too much. What need of all this extra surgery? And Brass told me this morning the lad ought to have died."

"Jack is young: he'll learn," said Mrs. Nat, contentedly contemplating the countless pots of her toilet-table.

Her husband stared at her: then he laughed irritably. "No, no, he's a man, as you said. I want a companion in my work at last, I tell you. I'm tired of an adoring booby. I want an—accomplice!"

Mrs. Nathanael gave a terrified scream. "I tell you," he continued hotly, "if I have to cram it down much longer, I'll be—writing to the papers what a humbug I am!"

"Nathanael! You'll ruin us!" She seized a gold-stoppered vinaigrette.

He flung down his nightly delight on the table before her, the loose contents of his pockets, here, there, everywhere, the sovereigns and shillings, his daily harvest of guineas. He pulled out some more from deep down under a pocket-book. "Your son won't starve," he said, neatly piling the coins, "but when I was his age, I was making——"

"I know, I know," she said.

"He must see Vouvray at work. But Vouvray won't last. The parsons will hunt him down *à-propos* of the monkey theory. I must think of something else." He spread himself out, half-undressed, in front of his lace-hung wife. "All the same, the parsons had better look out. They've had their day, it's the doctors' turn. The world has given up caring about its soul: it has got all the more anxious about its body! The old beliefs have gone: your digestion's your conscience to-day. The public has learnt that the miracles were magnetism, the virtues a twist in your brain. Is it our fault, ma'am,"—he pointed to the little rows of piles—"if it crowds to the new shrines, the new confessionals, and babbles of its symptoms, not its sins? We can't make half out of our 'homes' what the priests made out of hell! But the convents of the twentieth century, to which the new fanatics come crowding are the Sanatoria: Jack must be the abbot of mine!"

"I wish he was married," said Mrs. Nat.

"'Tis the new religion!" cried Dr. Russett, enthusing. "The old medication, with its incidental draught and bolus, is forgotten: hygiene, as a persistent occupation is the medicine of the future! The coming age is going to live for, and think of, its body. Nobody listens to the poor dead parsons. *We* are the new infallible priests that ban and threaten a trembling world! Every word from our lips is an oracle! Well, after all, don't we know as much about what we speak of as ever did the parsons? Don't we, my lady, answer me that!"

"And you call yourself a humbug!" humorously shrilled Mrs. Nat.

Russett stopped: a sudden disillusion showed itself in his

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face. Yet he turned resolutely round to his wife, and winked. "*Haruspex*——" he began. "But you don't understand Latin!"

"Few women do," replied Mrs Nathanael, nettled, "and a good thing, too."

"And a very good thing, too," said Dr. Russett. "As the priests and the doctors have always found."]

CHAPTER XVI

THE new religion was in full swing at Peysonnax. Everybody was fussily interested, doing something for his body from morning to night. The winter woods resounded with the healthful existence of the tailless ape.

Henry Lomas had taken kindly to the follies of the monkey-life. Every morning he was weighed in the oddest file of sleepy *déshabillés*: his nuts were then counted out to him, and he went and chopped his wood. For, all these things we know our cousins daily do. And it is not unedifying to stand chopping your wood beside two elderly chopping millionaires (upheld by memories of the "Grand Old Man") and a couple of youthful dudes, triumphantly carried through by bets on the number of their blows. When the alarm-watch which every patient was ordered to wear in his pocket went off, the worker would immediately pause, and the American Railway King and the Austrian Court Chamberlain would lean on their axes, munching their three Brazil nuts.

The wholesome tree-life was everywhere. Vouvray could express himself with great bitterness on the subject of those specialists who sought health on or under the soil. Schrumpelbaum, for instance, makes his patients live in subterranean grotto-houses, a sort of hygienic Welbeck. But Vouvray declared the idea was absurd. "Death goes under. Life soars!" said this great and wise teacher. "The serpent was bidden creep on its belly. Man climbs!" Every balcony had its hammock, in which the more convinced patients spent the night. The pine-woods were full of them—hammocks—hung higher and lower, in careful graduations, like Oertel's "Terrainkur". You went up to the loftiest—a concession this to man's decadence—by rungs. "It is

wonderful!" said Henry. He stood watching an elderly lady, who had spent the last ten years in a Bath chair at Leamington, swarm up to the topmost eyrie and settle herself to "Was Adam ill?"

The autumn went with hardly a change in the dull green foliage. Then snow began to fall in masses; there followed weeks of damp grey mist. The patients went out in this daily and all day, of course. The Rajah of Rumdoolah, shivering along and listening for his alarm to go off, met Henry. He had broken through even his reserve—as every patient did sooner or later—when, hanging in a "number 2" hammock beside Henry's, he had got to consulting the latter on the new Rumdoolah Bank.

"Ah," said the Rajah, "he has done much for me—the doctor!"

"You feel better?" said Henry, pleased.

"I feel better *here*," the dignified Hindoo struck his black-clothed breast. "So much I can tell you. It is good to tell so much." But Henry, somehow—everybody knows everything in these places—knew a great deal more than His Highness told. That Oriental despot had been consumed by an unconquerable yearning to "remove" the no longer youthful denizens of his Zenana. The British Government had insisted on a system of Old Age Pensions. Some one had advised some one else that Vouvray had brought down a fervent young sportsman with a tender-hearted wife to clay pigeons and paper hares.

"When the mist has cleared off we shall toboggan," said Henry. It may be doubtful whether the Hindoo was anxious to toboggan, but he got a little "luge" like the rest of them. And the mists cleared off, and, glittering wide beneath the sun-filled azure, the glorious Alpine winter of snow-lit stillness gladdened with tobogganing, skating, ski-ing, the hopeful hearts of all. "Sport for sport's sake," said Vouvray approvingly. He had seen the monkeys sporting in the ravines of Algiers.

As for Lomas—once his fate accepted—he accepted also all its alleviations and enjoyed to the full, after so many years of uniform commercialism, the novel, diversified society of his fellow-anthropoids. Peysonnax—to vary the simile by contrast—was

to him as a hot-house full of unknown plants from all quarters, and he hummed about it, happy, like a bee.

His wife he was, of course, not allowed to visit. "But she's getting on nicely, Mr. Lom-as-s," said Sister Hilda, "I make a point of telling her so every morning and every evening. It keeps her spirits up, and I tell her you're quite happy without her. I'm sure that does her good."

Lomas tried to shake his head free of Sister Hilda, as one does with a recurrent fly. "Will she get better?" he once asked, his courage screwed up, waylaying Vouvray.

"Ultimately? I believe so. The spine is affected. Nobody could cure her but I. She ought to have given in long ago. These women! The one half imagine they are ill when they are not: the other half do not know when they are! She is far more ill than you, yet you—you would have died of apoplexy in a year or two, and now you are going to live long."

"That is a blessing—up to a point," said Henry.

"It is—up to the point when one breaks down! Nor need you fear a solitary age. She, exhausted as she is, Madame can live to be a hundred!"

"Thank you, you are very kind," said Lomas.

"I am not kind: I am sincere. In a medical man I am not yet sure whether it is a virtue or a fault. I have put your wife on a new diet this morning. Twice a day she gets a basin of raw oatmeal, apples and almonds chopped and mixed with oil. That is not my own invention: a colleague in Wurtemberg has worked marvels with it. And I shall give her injections of the new Paris remedy, formic acid, the essence of the energy of the ant."

"You are kind: you are very kind," said Lomas hopefully. He wandered out into the sunshine.

"Come and luge," said Tom.

Tom, Miss Loewy's co-millionaire bridegroom, was Lomas's favorite amongst all the intellectual or distinguished people collected at Peysonnax. Tom was not intellectual, but he was distinguished. He was by no means a convinced Vouvrayan—a rarest exception—and greatly to be pitied on that account.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Trouillot, "when, daily, around him, the lame are made to walk, and the blind to see!" This was partly symbolical, but Vouvray had certainly, by his treatment, dissolved the film of cataract from the eyes of an old Scotch judge.

"Or would you prefer to chop wood?" asked Tom resignedly: he drew forth the costly alarm watch, with its diamond T and M, that Millie had given him. His was a simple soul, and hitherto he had taken his gilded existence simply. Accident had rendered him permanently famous in Europe and America, the accident of a bet taken up, late at night, in a Paris club, when somebody had happened to remark that a man couldn't dress quietly and spend four thousand pounds a year on his clothes. "Yes—he can," said Tom. He won easily, of course, by wearing a fresh dark suit every morning and new dinner things every night. But the fame of this great exploit was trumpeted in the usual manner by every newspaper, big or little, in Christendom and outside. The furry Laplanders read of it, and also the coral-clad Polynesians. "Oh, don't!" exclaimed Tom, the first time he met Lomas, "I know. 'Yankee outwits a French Vicomte.' Sometimes I think I shall change my name." The first really bad sickness the young man ever had was his frantic love of Milly Loewy. So here he was turning healthy for her sake. "Shall we talk about our symptoms?" he would say with the nearest approach to a sneer on his honest face. He sought out Lomas for this reason, that Lomas declared he had no symptoms to talk about.

And soon the national Swiss sport of lugging supplanted every other form of entertainment. Everybody, young and old, "*se lugeait*"—the bathman and servants did it, in the moonlight, late. The little wooden sledges went skimming at lightning speed adown the great white slopes. You rushed to the bottom in two minutes: it took an hour's toil to climb back. One of the millionaires had wanted to construct a little funicular railway—"No railways for me," said Vouvray. "Health ends where the railroads begin." He arranged his small world in his own manner.

A Royal Prince, arriving at Aulch station in spite of Vouvray's telegraphed refusal to receive him, found no carriage would take him on to Peysonnax.

"Three things I cannot cure," said Vouvray, "tuberculosis, insanity, and cancer. Such patients I will not keep, no, not for one day."

"Therefore he will cure us both," said Lomas to himself in many a slow hour of meditation. *He* was become a believer, by faith and reason, which are always more lastingly reliable than sight. And every night, before turning in, he paced his room, like every patient who could walk at all at Peysonnax, in the dark, by his open window, in the costume he had worn—more than fifty years ago—at his birth.

CHAPTER XVII

LUCIA lay for many weeks in the cloistered room, and Sister Hilda nursed her. After the first shock of isolation you were glad to rest, when you felt so very, very tired. The Polish doctress, with the beard and spectacles, came twice daily to inject the essence of the ant. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard," said Lucia, turning wearily in her bed.

"I beg your pardon," answered Sister Hilda. "Did you mean me, Mrs. Lom'as-s?"

"Dull? It is our mission to be dull," said Sister Hilda.

"She fulfils it," thought Lucia.

"Oh, *thank you*, sister!"

For Sister Hilda felt hurt, and showed it, if you didn't break the compulsory silence to thank her for doing something which in nine cases out of ten you did not want done. It was one of her unconscious rules to start making the patient comfortable just when the patient was at last dropping off to sleep. "Ah," she said, thumping the pillow, her great cross gleaming, "think what it must have been in the old days that Mrs. Gamp wrote about, before there were trained nurses! Ah, dreadful! Dreadful! Don't you like these tuberoses? Well, I got them on purpose. I don't think that's quite kind of you, Mrs. Lom'as-s. Is your headache better than yesterday? I forgot to ask."

She busied herself at the washstand, clinking everything she touched. "Two spoons of raw oatmeal," she said aloud, "four apples *with* the peel—I wonder why?—three spoonfuls of salad oil. What did you say? 'The electric light in your eyes.' Dr. Bouverie expressly said you were not to talk. And I can't see to mix your mess in the dark. The almonds? No, I had *not* for-

gotten those: I was going to put them in after you had eaten it—I mean, after it was ready. Well, as I was telling you, my uncle, the alderman——”

In the blessed silence of midnight, after the babel of the day’s nursing, Lucia lay alone. She slept little and dreamed more. Often her long watches were disturbed by sights and sounds—or so it seemed to her—of a life that was far, far, far away in a dim reverie, unreal, and yet quite close—why, yesterday’s experience: the lake, Socrates, and the ducks, her beech, Busk, the village!—all coming back again, and gone for ever!

Sister Hilda slept next door, and no sound—but Vouvray allowed no sound at night—would rouse her. “If you cough, I shall hear you, Mrs. Lom’as-s,” she said. “There isn’t a lighter sleeper in all our Guild. When I nursed my uncle, the alderman, he used to say he daren’t snore——”

“I don’t think I snore,” said Lucia anxiously.

“Oh, never mind me, Mrs. Lom’as-s; we sisters are accustomed not to sleep. I shan’t mind your keeping me awake, Mrs. Lom’as-s.”

“You have seen my husband this morning?”

“Yes, indeed. I thought he was looking very flushed.”

“And yesterday you said he was so pale?”

“Yes, so he was. I make a point of looking well at him every day so as to report,” replied Sister Hilda, smiling complacently.

“I wish he looked as well as you do,” said Lucia, faintly cheery.

But Sister Hilda, who had never in her life understood a play upon words outside a comic paper, took this as an insulting personal remark and retorted that the doctor at “the Hospital”—none of your foreign faddists—had ordered her *nourishment*, not the rubbish you got here! In silent dudgeon—and, indeed, the only way temporarily to silence her was to offend her (but she soon forgave)—she settled herself down (unnecessarily close to the bed) with *Tit-Bits*, for Henry procured her a number of penny papers (forbidden to the patients) which she needed as her daily bread: soon she was shaking with laughter all over. Presently she glanced up to find Lucia’s features contracted with suffering.

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"Are you in pain?" she asked.

"My back hurts: would you mind rubbing it again?"

Sister Hilda rose with alacrity. She massaged admirably and, like all of us, she enjoyed doing what she knew she did well. "There!" she said with a final squeeze. "Now you'll be quite comfortable:" she was naturally annoyed, when presently turning a page, to see the face contracted again, but a smart rebuff from "Miss Olden Moneybags" to "young Hardupp" sent her off into little squeaks of merriment. "You mustn't think me hard-hearted," she said, "you see, I'm so accustomed to suffering! Shall I read you some of these: they might take your mind off your back?"

"You know, Dr. Vouvray forbids any reading," whispered Lucia. Sister Hilda, once more offended, crackled up the paper with a scrunch that knocked her elbow against a Sèvres cup recently purchased by Henry—he was constantly sending little tokens into Lucia's solitude.

"What's broke can't be mended," said Sister Hilda inspecting the fragments over her *pincenez*.

"How dreadful that sounds!" said Lucia, and added thoughtfully: "But it's wrong to be morbid."

"Very, very wrong," assented Sister Hilda severely. "How morbid *I* could be, Mrs. Lomas, away from all my friends!"

Lucia tried hard not to feel morbid—a difficult thing in a rest cure, with your husband round the corner and raw oatmeal on your chest. During the sleepless nights she said all the poetry she had learnt as a child and her Catechism, and other things good to think of and reposeful.

"I hope you're not afraid of ghosts, Mrs. Lomas?" remarked the sister, tucking in the invalid all round for the night. "No? I'm glad to hear that, for of course ghosts exist, but it's very wrong, as my uncle the alderman used to say, to believe in them. Good night, Mrs. Lomas: just cough, if you want me: don't mind. I practically never sleep. My uncle was a *very* religious man, Church of England, of course."

Lucia did not believe in ghosts, and yet no natural explanation

seemed reasonable for all the odd sounds which disturbed that deadened house at night. Vouvray allowed not a noiseless door to open, on any excuse; not a bell might be rung; and a man who had twice dropped his boots on the floor—a most provoking habit!—had been requested to leave. Therefore there reigned, in theory, silence absolute: the vast building was muffled from basement to garret, and warranted not to creak.

What, then, were the noises Lucia heard—for instance on one night, exceptionally still, with no wind at all, and the stars shining brilliant, in the snow-lit scenery? There is a certain clear cold which you feel and see in the small hours, however dark and warm your own room may be. Lucia lay and listened. A grinding, sawing noise. Not the crackle of frost or the throb of hot-water pipes or the crack of timber. Something animate at work. A mouse? No, not a mouse, far more like a human being, stealthily grinding—sawing. There it was again! Smothered but distinctly audible. In the corner by the door to the adjoining room, away from Sister Hilda's. A persistent muffled human sawing now: Lucia's heart stood still. She felt it must be a delusion: not for one moment could the noise be real. Dr. Vouvray had twice asked her, whether she did not suffer from delusions—seeing and hearing things that were not: evidently that was a symptom of spinal complaint. He had congratulated her on its absence: now it had come. Once, a fortnight ago, she had fancied she saw a man sitting by the fireplace, in the dusk, when, of course, there was no man. It must be the same thing with that grating sound. Plainly though she heard it, she could know it wasn't there. The Polish doctress had told her, that the lady just beneath her was half dead from a disease of the heart which any fright must render fatal. "So we must be very careful not to startle her," said the doctress.

"I know that sort of case. I've had a lot of them," said Sister Hilda, dropping the tongs.

With unresting anxiety Lucia had avoided disturbing the lady downstairs. She dared not knock against her wall or call aloud to the nurse. The sound continued. By the feeble glow of the

dying embers—the house had wood-fires, beside its pipes, for cheerfulness and ventilation—Lucia saw the padded swing-door shake. Dragging herself half-way erect on her pillow, she managed to reach the electric lamp, which the sister nightly, if not reminded, placed just outside her reach, and as she struck it up, softly illuminating the whole room under its green shade, she beheld—with her own eyes beheld—the padded door fall open. The sawing had stopped. In the ordinary wooden door, which remained closed, a small panel had been roughly cut away, and through this panel a hand was feeling for the bolt upon Lucia's side. Before she had time to cry out, before she had even faintly realized what was happening, the stealthily creeping hand had reached the bolt and drawn it: the heavy door receded, and in the aperture a man stood revealed, with the full light behind him, in some gorgeous Southern uniform, all azure and gold.

"For the love of God, do not cry out!" he said. He said it so calmly, in foreign English, he momentarily tranquilized her. In the silence he came forward and lighted all her electric lamps also. "Let us have light: I do not love darkness," he said. Then he turned to the bed, with a low sweep of his plumed three-cornered hat. Lucia saw that he was no longer young.

"I beg you a thousands pardons for intruding thus," he said, "I could not help myself. I am not at all mad. I am the General Count Monteiro de Torres Nicteroy. Your neighbor. A Brazilian."

"What do you want with me?" faltered Lucia, her hand near the bell she durst not ring.

"Nothing. You are quite safe. I entreat of you: do not call!"

"Then leave me at once," she said, hardly knowing what she said.

"That is the one thing I cannot do. But as soon as I can, I will obey you. Do you object to my opening the window for half a minute?"

"Most certainly I object," cried Lucia. She would have said more but the General interrupted her.

"That is a great pity," he said with a deep sigh, "for then you

would have been rid of me and could have rung. While now, if you ring, I shall be most regretfully compelled to stab you." He drew, as he spoke, his ornamental sword from the scabbard, and presented it at Lucia's breast.

"I am so sorry," he said, "but do not move or I must do it. May I explain? I am not mad a bit. I have only the misfortune to be married: I hope, for your sake you have not?" He waited politely, but Lucia could not have found strength to reply, had she wished.

"Alas, yes, I am married," continued the Count, still carefully pointing his sword, "but I have escaped from my wife, all the way from Bahia! It is far, but a wife can run farther!" He came nearer: Lucia drew back from the sword-point: he bent towards her, halfway along the blade. "She is in the next room," he said in a hoarse whisper, "she has found me. If you were to go in, you would not see her. But she is hiding there. She has followed me. She is there!"

Lucia was now certain she was alone with a madman. She coughed, coughed violently, coughed herself black in the face.

"A bad cold," said the general listening attentively, "but nothing serious. Not from the chest!"

Lucia coughed again. She could do little else, except pray. And her soul cried out for Henry! Henry, tranquilly asleep two stories above her. How silent the house had now become! Not a sound. The General stamped his foot. "Hush!" she said, affrighted for the sick woman underneath.

"Then listen! I have escaped from the next room because my wife is there—as I escaped from Bahia. There was a charming woman with fair hair, a Protestant nun—I thought to find her here: where is she?"

"No matter," continued the poor creature at once. "You, too, madame, are charming. But you do not smile to me, as the nun smiled always, and winked"—he made the movement—"whenever I winked her way! My wife!—she would murder the nun, as she killed poor Pepita, and nearly killed Dolores, and—oh, these women! Can I help it that I love them?" Again he

bowed over the sword. "You, too, madame, are charming, but it is not of these things I am come to speak." Lucia coughed and coughed vainly, and her soul cried out for Henry! Henry! Henry!

"You see," whispered the madman, "this is all! I will not go back yonder"—he pointed the sword swiftly to the open door and back again—"for my wife is there. I could not escape through my window, for there is an awning underneath. I cut my way through with a knife from my dressing-case—I hoped to find the sweet nun here: she would help me. Now I have told you all. I am not mad a bit, only married. I am the General Count Mont-eira de Torres Nicteroy. I put on my uniform to please the beautiful nun, for she begged me to, yesterday, in the passage. And also, because it is right to do the thing I am going to do in full dress. For now I am going away."

"Yes, yes: go away," cried Lucia.

He smiled. "But you must let me do it in my own may," he said. "I am going through the window."

"But you cannot. You will kill yourself."

He turned to her, with a pathetic smile. "Well," he said, "if I do, I shall go to hell. And—my wife is very pious, they will never allow her to follow me there!"

His voice was quite matter-of-fact; he moved to the window. Suddenly he said: "I have not come here for child's play: there is no time to be lost," and, as he said this, quick as lightning he leaped back, flung the electric bell handle, which lay on Lucia's bed as far as its silken cord would carry it and ran to the window again, muttering: "It is time! It is time!"

Lucia had half lifted herself up, praying to God for strength to walk after these weeks of prostration, her whole being crying out for her husband, for the husband they had taken away from her, for his help in her sorest need!

"Stop!" she exclaimed. "Stop! Think what you are doing!"

He looked round fiercely. "I am running away from my wife!" he cried. "The Almighty will forgive any one who has to run as far as I!"

She was half out of bed, reeling, unable to advance, but when

he saw her thus, he rushed back on her, sword in hand. At that moment the outer door opened and Henry came into the room.

"My God, what is this?" he said.

"It is all a mistake," replied the Count with mad presence of mind, and he ran back into his room, banging the damaged door with a crash that rang through the sleeping house.

"My God, what is this?" repeated Henry, his voice shaking, his arms round his wife.

"Oh, Henry, how did you know?" sobbed Lucia, breaking down utterly. "How could you come?"

"I can't tell," replied Henry simply. "I felt you calling. I couldn't stay upstairs any longer, and I came." And now another door also opened, and Sister Hilda, in amazing undress, slowly looked round the edge.

"Did you knock, Mrs. Lom'as-s," she began. "Why, Mr.—" her glance fell on the broken panel, through which the General was glaring, and she went into shrieking hysterics at once. Already, however, the bang of the door had brought attendants, doctors, Vouvray himself. All fell aside, as the master entered.

His first word was for the screaming woman on the floor. "Chloroform her," he said.

They carried away Lucia immediately to another room in an entirely different part of the house. Henry knelt beside her bed. "I felt you calling," was all he could say. "I wanted to stop away, but at last I couldn't. So I came."

CHAPTER XVIII

LIGHT again! Light at last!" said Lucia, when Henry threw back her mattressed shutters. Then she laughed, a nervous little, brave laugh. "So the whole isolation is a failure," she said, "I have had my visit after all." Henry turned and as the entering sunbeams caught his face, every other interest forsook her thoughts in the inward cry: "How ill he looks!" Aloud she said: "I am so sorry for Doctor Vouvray."

"Yes, I believe he is in a dreadful way," replied Henry. "The Brazilian seemed all right in his head. They have never had any one the least deranged—mentally—before."

"And as for that poor General," began Sister Hilda, pushing open with a pot of unnecessary hot water the door behind which she had as usual stood listening, "if he's deranged, I'm deranged: that's all I can say. And to see them pushing him into the sleigh this morning—or 'hear,' I should say, for it wasn't daylight—and, indeed, a work of darkness!—and he calling for me, poor gentleman, as knowing I was his only friend! 'Murder! They take me to my wife!' he cries. 'Thieves!' And what could I do? A weak woman? I could only call: 'Courage! I'll telegraph to the British Ambassador!' So I did."

"Telegraphed?" exclaimed Henry.

"No: called. And I'll trust you'll telegraph immediately, Mr. Lom'as-s, before they hide him away!"

"But he told me his wife was in the room with him: he really was out of his mind," pleaded Lucia.

Sister Hilda's cold stare manifestly took stock of Lucia as a judge of imbecility, but before she could prepare to reply: "The British Minister has nothing to do with it," Henry cut in irritably.

"Britain, I have always understood, protects the oppressed of every nation," Sister Hilda answered loftily. "As my uncle the alderman used to say: 'One step on British soil and—free!'"

"Well, he isn't on British soil and—oh, hang it! the man's manifestly mad and moreover his affairs are no business of mine!"

"Sir!" exclaimed Sister Hilda, struggling with her tears, "then *these* weak hands——" she threw them forward, so violently that the hot water splashed up and over, whereupon she screamed and dropped the can.

"Oh, the lady underneath!" cried Lucia. "I forgot: there's no lady——"

But Hilda overrode her. "The sooner you leave this house of oppression, the better!" Hilda cried. "Things are happening here daily—if I were to speak!"—

"Well, speak!" said Henry.

The sister shook her wise head. "It's our mission to be silent and helpful," she replied. "My first duty now is to help the unfortunate Count to obtain his divorce. I promised him that yesterday on the landing. I know all the particulars. I must speak to my uncle the alderman——"

"Are you going to leave me?" cried Lucia in dismay. For the patient if very weak, always feels dismay.

"I cannot imagine you will stay in this den of iniquity beyond to-morrow," replied Sister Hilda, carrying the hot water, meaninglessly, away.

Henry got his wife out into the sun-box on her balcony: he sat down beside her with the Second Book of Chronicles. "Full of living interest," he said. "Vouvray is quite right."

Mere modern politics were strictly prohibited at Peysonnax.

A member of the British Parliament once smuggled in a copy of the *Daily Mail*. Vouvray saw it under the bed and remorselessly expelled the culprit.

"Henry," said Lucia, and her voice fell clear in the sun-soaked frosty stillness, "tell me: is everybody still alive?"

"Yes," he answered, and realized suddenly how she had been

locked up for two months, in that living black grave, with Sister Hilda.

"Rob?"

"Rob is all right. But he wants us back. Perhaps we might go back? If you really feel stronger."

"Yes, I feel much stronger. Perhaps we might go back."

"If Dr. Russett thought so."

"If Dr. Russett—you believe in Dr. Russett?"

"Unutterably. Didn't he know about the scarlet-fever? And advise this treatment. In fact, I—I telegraphed this morning: I told him you were better: I asked for a reply." Henry's eyes showed the longing he kept out of his voice.

"I do feel better," repeated Lucia, struggling hard. She lay silent; Henry studied the horrible illness of King Jehoram, of whom it is said so pathetically that he "departed without being desired." "I should like to see the ducks," resumed Lucia. "And Socrates. The cygnets must be quite grown up."

"I suppose so."

"Sister Hilda told me about mother: you remember she was my one exception. Is she still at Baveno?"

"I believe so. Unless she's already gone on to Mentone."

"I wish we could just catch a glimpse of Beechlands!"

She looked away to the wide stretches of snow-field, the rugged white mountains, all the solitude and coldness, pent-up and still. On a small lake below them patients were skating in the sunshine: others were lingering yet further down. Their laughter sounded up from afar.

"Don't talk of Beechlands," he said.

"True. It was thoughtless of me."

"No, no, stupid of *me*. There is the telegraph boy. Now we shall know."

Sister Hilda, her sweet face at its sourest, brought the telegram.

"May I ask," she said, "is it from the poor Count? I have a right to know."

"It is not," he said, as he tore open the paper. "Lucia!" he cried, and he held it out to her.

"Delighted to hear your good news. Continue to be guided absolutely by Vouvray." He dropped the telegram.

"We shall never see Beechlands again," he said.

"Henry—what do you mean?" His voice frightened her.

"Vouvray thinks you should stay here a year at least, I know. And always live in the mountains. And Russett wrote to me a month ago, in reply, that the air about Chillingford was bad for you. Swiss air was the thing for you, and you see again he was right!" He hung over the balcony. "Oh, Russett's a marvelous doctor. I didn't think any human being knew as much about the thing as he does!

"But you are going to get well," he continued vehemently. "That's the great thing, the one thing to live for! A year—two years—what does it matter? Then you'll be well again, dearest: think of that! We shall settle down in this country—what does Beechlands matter? You'll be well!" Marvelous seemed to him the chance of her recovery, for Vouvray had admitted to him, "disease of the spine."

"Oh, Henry, is it worth the price?"

"Health?" he said almost roughly. "Yes, it is worth the price. Any price. Hundreds of people have given up everything that makes life worth living, because some doctor told them, and have come abroad like us—to live."

She sighed. "Busk!" she said.

"Busk will get a new master. I am trying to sell the place quietly. I have had a good offer. This telegram decides me."

"An offer? From whom?"

"The man's name is Scragge. But he's acting for a company. He wants it for a sanatorium. And I cannot help feeling I'd rather have it a sanatorium—a home of health—doing good to hundreds—than anything else."

"Yes," she said softly, "yes."

"And, Lucia, you needn't feel unhappy about my having come here. The life has done me lots of good. Vouvray says: if I hadn't come, I should have died of apoplexy in a year or two."

She lifted her eyes, shining. "If only I had known!" she cried. "All these weeks! No one told me!"

"But you were not allowed to hear anything."

"No—yet the sister talked immensely. At least she never thought she talked, but she was always saying something. Oh, Henry, had I but known, it would have changed everything!" She checked herself, wondering why, to her fancy, he should look so ill?

"It does everybody good," he said, "everybody. It is marvelous. The Rajah—there's a Rajah—was telling me only just now, how he felt a better man internally—I mean, normally—since he came here. And with him it can't be abandoning animal food, you see, for of course he never tasted any. Oh, Lucia, it's a wonderful place."

Lucia was silent.

"You like that—now, say you like that—the *normal* improvement?"

"Yes, I like that."

"If you saw what I see every day—you mustn't listen to that fool!" He changed his tone. "By-the-by, I had a letter from Mary Corry for you—a queer, excited letter. That boy has got his legs."

"Yes, she said she'd ask her husband to give him them. It's very sad."

"I ought to have said 'kept' his legs. They've healed up stiff."

"Is it possible? Oh, is it possible?"

"Dearest creature, how nervous you've become! Hush! Yes. Why?"

"Is it possible? Oh, Henry, what does she say?"

"She writes a lot of stuff about Christian Science: you don't want to hear that?"

"No, not now. But the other! The other!"

"She says—here it is—'Old Willes made me promise to write to you. He said: "Tell Mrs. Lomas what the Lord has done for us." As if I shouldn't have done that in any case! 'Oh, those doctors! Why, they might have cut off my legs!'"

"The boy walks," said Lucia softly. "He walks."

"After a manner."

"He walks."

The alarm struck in Henry's pocket: he rose. "Time to toboggan," he said.

In the passage Sister Hilda was awaiting him. "Mr. Lom'as-s," she said, "tell me, what was in that telegram! I have a claim!" He stared at her. "The poor Count declared he would appeal to me in his trouble. And as soon as he has obtained his divorce——" she blushed and smiled. "Duty forbids me to say more."

"The telegram has nothing to do with the Count," answered Henry, trying to pass.

At that moment Vouvray came down the passage, looking worried. The Count had been a great shock to him. "Healthy amusement!" he said, indicating the luge. "You walk about before your open window every night, I hope, like Adam did?"

"Of course I do," said Henry.

"That's right. Makes you sleep better."

"But I always slept well."

"Makes you sleep better still."

"I—I have often a bad pain in my back, doctor—like stabs."

"Rheumatism! Go and luge it away. But come into my private room first. The gentleman I was expecting has arrived."

Henry dropped his sleigh-string and walked into the "Sanctissimum," as the fervent patients called it. A young man turned from the window. "Mr. Lomas," he said, "my name is Russett. My father has sent me to see you, and Dr Vouvray."

Henry liked the frank look of the young man. "You could not have chosen a better teacher than Vouvray," he said genially. Thus Jack had arrived, still recalcitrant, but under peremptory orders to have a shy at his two birds. His fingers fiddled loosely with the stone. Vouvray had given little encouragement. "My method is myself," he said.

Lomas, more conciliatory, liked to put people at their ease. "It was kind of your father to tell you about our being here," he said.

"And you see, I can settle about your house," replied downright Jack. He hated the business—all business: he wished this negotiation well over.

"Excuse me: about my house? I don't quite understand?"

"Yes, my father was approached about Beechlands. He bade me say, as you were selling anyhow, he would feel—you see, your selling is owing to his advice—he would feel as if in buying——" A beastly business: Jack stuck.

"I am exceedingly obliged," said Lomas rather stiffly.

"Oh, no, you mustn't take it that way!" cried Jack eagerly. "There's no question of an obligation. It's purely a matter of business."

"Quite so. The gentleman who has been writing to me, this Mr. Scragge, said he had made a careful estimate out and would let me have his offer in good time. Are you the bringer of the offer?"

"I am. My father offers six thousand pounds."

"Six thou—— Is that the result, may I ask, of the estimate?" Henry spoke calmly, yet Jack felt that something had already gone very wrong. Nor did the other leave him long in doubt. "I should have thought nine thousand nearer the mark," said Henry.

Jack looked at his new acquaintance, suddenly grown an adversary. All business, as far as Jack knew, consisted in overreaching. It is far more difficult than many might imagine to escape from the influence of theories proclaimed by a parent one vastly admires. "Jack, your father knows everything!" said Mrs. Nat. She added: "And he's always right." She had said so when Jack was a baby.

"Six thousand is our agent's estimate," said Jack shortly: he regretted that so pleasant-looking a chap should prove a screw.

"It is wanted for a sanatorium, I understand?" asked Lomas.

"Yes."

"Paying patients only?" added Henry thoughtfully.

"Dear me, yes: it isn't a charity in any way," eagerly answered Jack.

"The price is ridiculously inadequate."

"I'd better give you his whole message at once," replied Jack, annoyed by the adverb: he produced a paper from his pocket-book. "He offers six thousand and suggests that two be allowed to stand as a mortgage. Of the remaining four he would pay two——"

"Two!"

Jack looked from his paper. "Two in cash," he said firmly, "and two in valuable South African gold mine shares." He laid down the scrap of paper on his lap and gazed expectantly at his companion.

"Your father is not aware," began Lomas very slowly, "that I am—that I was a business man?"

"No, he isn't. He told me you were a private gentleman who went in for a lot of charities. He had often seen your name on committees."

"Just so. And is your father himself much of a—business man?"

"Oh, no: he knows nothing of money. And cares less."

"Would you sell your house on these terms?"

"I suppose I should make the best I could. By-the-by, my father says those African shares will positively be worth double their present value in a twelvemonth, so he's really offering eight thousand pounds. You must quite understand that."

"I shall try to. I suppose he gives me time?"

Jack noted the two red spots on his antagonist's cheeks. He was sorry for him, but a little ashamed for him also. Such avarice!

"My father expects me to telegraph your decision tonight."

"Well, you can't do that. Telegraph office closed for the day. So you must leave me till to-morrow morning." Partly irritated, partly amused, he had not the heart to give his refusal point-blank to the young man who had only just come in after traveling so far.

As he walked away, picking up his luge, he felt that the interview had greatly upset him. His head was in a whirl. It came too suddenly on top of last night's strange experience and all the

emotions he had recently undergone. Was Russett, who had taken their whole future in his hands to mould it, a rogue? Evidently the son believed in his father. A rogue the son was not, nor a fool, but hardly a man of business. Well, the father was not a man of business. Yet, all the same, the violent, harassing question came back on him: Was Russett a rogue? "Oh, bother: I can't stand this," he said, "let's luge." He wanted to get rid of the oppression that was upon him, the cloud before his eyes. "Let's luge!"

The pellucid air shone magnificent in the overwhelming sunlight. The broad, white slopes sank, one sparkle of diamonds, between the far radiances of mountain and sky. Miles away, in the silence, the faint post-horn sounded, heralded the still-distant, unique outside incident of the day. Here and there over the expanse, the self-occupied seekers after health through recreation were dotted. The Rajah of Rumdoolah, shivering as usual, stood tinkering his little sleigh. Two of the millionaire Vienna bankers were alternately dragging each other along, as a test of returning strength, and laughing loudly. A well-known member of London society, Mrs. R——, had just turned a gay somersault in the snow. Tom sat on his "luge" gazing sentimentally at the pale crescent moon.

Henry flew down the few minutes' fell rush of quivering and tingling delight: then the thing slowed down, stopped: he got off and began the interminable ascent. Often, of late, he had found the slow climb growing longer and had halted, breathless, to debate with himself, whether the brief ecstasy was worth the long, straining fatigue? He would come to the philosophic conclusion that it *was*, as all ecstasy is in life, or we should never know ecstasy at all. And then he would resume his slow tramp up the snow, dragging his bumping sleigh behind him.

But this afternoon the way up seemed longer than ever: the sun sank low: the air grew colder. He stopped several times, gasping, every breath a stab—his heart beat into his brain. The suffocating weight upon his chest was growing altogether intolerable. He had never felt it like this before. He looked round, rather

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wildly, in the emptiness, to see if there was any one who could come to his assistance. He was dizzy: something seemed to break and spring loose inside him. He tried to call to young Tom, the American: he could not utter a sound. Suddenly his mouth filled: choking, he put his handkerchief to his lips, and drew it away quickly, drenched, frothy, a brilliant red.

CHAPTER XIX

LUCIA, lying in her sun-box, watched an odd little procession that crept up towards Peysonnax. Before she, only mildly interested, could distinguish the figures they turned out of sight behind a clump of trees. For Henry had found strength to indicate this digression under sheltering woods to the back entrance, and Tom, almost ere the gesture was accomplished, had understood why it was made.

But nobody could prevent Sister Hilda from preparing the invalid.

Sister Hilda, in her spruce black dress and big gold cross and bright soft hair, appeared smoothly round the corner of the sun-box.

"Mrs. Lom'as-s," she said, "I fear I must prepare you for bad news!"

Lucia imagined the General had come to grief. "I am sorry," she said.

"For *very* bad news," continued the sister reproachfully. "I hope you will have strength to bear it."

"What is it? What has happened?" exclaimed Lucia alarmed.

"Hush: prepare yourself!" Sister Hilda stood examining her charge, uncertainty rampant in every otherwise placid feature. "I wish I could be sure you were sufficiently prepared," she said.

"What has happened?" almost screamed Lucia.

"Oh, please, you mustn't fly out at me like that!" protested Sister Hilda. "Article one hundred and twenty-seven of our 'Instruction' says we must *never* tell bad news to our patients until they've been properly prepared."

"I am more than prepared," cried Lucia.

"Well, then, Mr. Lom'as-s has broken a blood-vessel but he isn't dead."

The same news had reached Vouvray in the midst of an important disquisition with Jack Russett. "I have nothing to show you here that you cannot see in a day," said Vouvray. "You would waste your time. I have no secrets, no tricks of any kind. Every one of my patients, when cured, can go out into the world and cure others, and I wish to God they would! There need be no disease without infection. All the weaknesses man doesn't die of would vanish, if only we could find the perfectly healthy life."

"But surely there's a difficulty there," said Jack.

"An immense difficulty! We must work our way towards it. Young man,"—Vouvray laid his hand on Jack's shoulder, "others will come after me who will do more and do better, than I." Vouvray took a few steps aside: he paused before his beautiful figure of Hope. "Ah, what a future to live for!" he said breaking into French, "I am an old man: I shall not see it. The perfectly healthy life."

"If only we *knew* more!" exclaimed Jack in his mother-tongue. "It is a marvelous science."

"The science is in its infancy and the human race is in its dotage," replied Vouvray with fervor. "But the race will renew its youth, recreated in the return to the natural life. When the science of curing—which never was worth much—is become the science of living, then—then——" his emotion mastered him. "Young man," he turned brightly to his companion, "you have a great name: your face is not the face of a fool: don't waste your time here, studying me! There are wide fields lying open in which Dr. Russett's son can excel even his illustrious father! It is a fine thing to be Dr. Russett's son, but it is a great obligation. Go out and work! Work!" His eyes kindled.

"But what do you want me to do?" asked Jack, bewildered at the thought of the Beechlands sanatorium.

"You have a short holiday, you say? Go to Algiers, to the Gorges de la Chiffa: see the monkeys there in a state of nature: it is the nearest accessible place for that: Gibraltar is no good.

There, perhaps, watching them, a mission may dawn upon you, a whole future, a vocation! You understand me! I will speak slower. The man will go and live in the deserts of Africa or the jungles of Asia, who will dwell among our prototypes, becoming one of them, who will find out what they seek and avoid, what harms and what benefits them, that man will live to be the greatest benefactor of the human race since—since Noah!”

“Why Noah?” asked Jack rebelliously, generally unconvinced.

“Well—if it hadn’t been for Noah, there couldn’t have been any human race at all.”

“But I haven’t time for Algiers,” protested Jack.

“Then—spend a fortnight on the Riviera,” replied Vouvray with sudden scorn. “You will find the nearest approach to the monkey there.”

“And consumptives,” said Jack, thinking aloud. “I fear I have an obvious dislike of unnecessary infection.” At this moment Tom and an attendant brought in Henry to Vouvray.

“Blood!” cried Vouvray, as soon as he had been told, and a great trembling seized on him, which he strove in vain to master. “God in Heaven, is it possible? Blood!” He struck the telephone bell on his table. “Ice! Ice!” he cried. The statue of Hope smiled up at him.

The door of the “sanctissimum” opened without warning: it is told that such a thing has never happened before or since. Lucia stood on the threshold.

“Henry, you are ill!” she said.

The two doctors bending over the sick man, turned in amazed alarm. “But, madame, you cannot walk!” exclaimed Vouvray.

“What is it?” she answered, not heeding, perhaps not hearing. She took a step towards the couch. The young doctor—why, she had seen him before!—pushed forward a chair.

“What is it? Sister Hilda says we are going away.” For indeed, all the way down in the lift, Sister Hilda had said it was a dispensation, and now they would escape from “this grotto.” She had settled on the word “grotto,” calling the tenement “grottoesque.”

"Mr. Lomas mustn't talk just at present," said Vouvray, gazing from husband to wife with a look of sympathy which Lucia found it difficult to endure. "Perhaps it would be better, if he left Peysonnax for a while."

"Later on!" exclaimed Jack impulsively.

"Yes, yes, we will go," said Lucia.

"Not you, madame. Hush, I tell you, he must not speak. But he wishes you to stay with him and get well."

"No, no; we will go away."

Henry faintly moved his lips. "Tell me, doctor," she said. She turned her chair, that she might no longer see the younger physician's eyes. Why did both men watch her thus? She was strong. She could bear anything.

"Mr. Lomas has brought up some blood," said Vouvray with a visible effort. "Change of air and repose will doubtless——"

"From the lungs!" exclaimed Lucia. She had heard so little about illness in her life, she was quite unaware of the dread significance of her words. They sprang to her lips as a cry of anguish from one who did not even know there could be hemorrhage from any less fatal source.

But, by the merest fatality, Henry had read in his school-days about the illness of Keats, and the medical student's instant discovery of his fate, as he drew the handkerchief from his lips, had slept ever since in his mind. At the moment, therefore, when the like doom befell him he had realized its import. He quietly nodded.

"You do not know! You cannot know! You know nothing!" cried Vouvray. He was ashen-pale: in spite of his self-control his manner revealed his exquisite distress. "It is slight," he added gently, "but Mr. Lomas had better go immediately where he can nurse it. I was about to arrange it for him, when you entered, to leave to-morrow: I should recommend Mentone."

"It is too late for Davos!" said Lucia to herself. She knew about Davos, through a cousin there. In her weariness and yearning she dragged across to her husband and sank down beside him. "We will hasten to a climate that will cure you," she said,

and she kissed him on the lips. Jack Russett fought back his first movement of terror. Lucia put her arms about Henry: her one thought was: "it is so easy—oh, so easy!—to faint!" She held his hand tight, and resolutely fought her way back into this world of sentient pain. "We must go upstairs!" she said a little wildly, "and get ready!" She looked round, putting away the hair from about her eyes.

"These gentlemen will help your husband: they—they must carry him," said Vouvray, with more than womanly tenderness. He seated himself opposite her, as soon as they were alone. "It is no use you knocking yourself up," he said. "You must stay here and get well for his sake."

"I stay here and he go?"

"Yes; you are on the high-road to health already."

"Sister Hilda says my spine is diseased."

"Sister Hilda is a fool. It is diseased, and I will cure it. I would have cured Heinrich Heine. It is my greatest grief that he was born too soon."

"I go with my husband," said Lucia.

"If you do, you will lose all you have gained here. Mentone—so debilitating!—is the very worst climate you could have. I—I am your last, and your certain, chance of health. You can recover—or you can go, and lie on a sofa for a dozen years till you die. What use will that be to your husband? Choose!"

"Climate or no climate," replied Lucia, feeling her way, "bracing or debilitating, good for this, bad for that—of all such things I know nothing. Man's rule or God's law: surely that's my choice. And I go with my husband."

"I cannot keep him!" exclaimed Vouvray, again in French, passionately answering himself. "He is—infectious, *voilà!* No infectious patient may spend twenty-four hours at Peysonnax! All the rules of the house, all the printed restrictions and *promises* are against it. I could not look my other patients, my assistants in the face! My under-doctors—they would hoot me. See how frank I am. He is infectious—you, you who are so delicate, must remain *here!*"

His excited voice assumed tone of command; then it changed to the soft sweetness which all his patients knew. "*Tenez*. I will tell you something not a creature has heard in all this house. You see that face there"—he pointed to the single portrait upon his writing table—"is it not a lovely face?"

"A lovely face indeed," said Lucia.

"It is my daughter, my only child," said Vouvray simply. He threw up his leonine head and walked away to the darkening window. "She is a widow, without children: I lived with her at Geneva: we had never been separated, not for a day. While this house was building, she was suddenly struck down with tuberculosis. I had to leave her and come here. She lives in Geneva." He faltered, and for a long moment there was complete silence between them. The short winter day faded, against the grim outline, outside.

"It was your duty to come here," said Lucia softly.

"And to leave her," he answered quickly. "She is dying there. God, sometimes I wonder it takes her so long a time to die!" A knock came to the door: he turned impatiently with a stamp of the foot.

"Dr. Bouverie," said Sister Hilda, her head only visible, "would you please come up and tell Mr. Lom'as-s that he mustn't say a single word, if he wants to live a little longer?"

"I will come," said Vouvray, and added in French, "get rid of that idiot, whatever you do. One of my doctors must travel with your husband, though Heaven knows I can't spare any. I will see!"

"Get rid of me, madame?" declaimed Sister Hilda in Lucia's own room ten minutes later—the sister never understood any French, except when expected not to—"All the doctors are like that: only Bouverie's worse! At the hospital they're just dying to have me back, and the sooner I go the better! And the Spanish Count—my uncle, the alderman—I——" Sister Hilda burst into tears, but she brushed them away. "We shall see what we shall see!" she said, sobbing. "Dr. Bouverie'll wish he hadn't spoke, when I'm married to the Portuguese Prince!" She sobbed

louder. "He told me he was a Portuguese Prince." While her sobs were at their loudest she demanded in a matter-of-fact tone: "Do you know about Portuguese princes, Mrs. Lom'as-s? *All* the Royalties are related among themselves, aren't they? Would a Portuguese Prince be a cousin to the King?"

"The unfortunate man who broke into my room last night was a lunatic," replied Lucia with salutary severity.

"As for that, madame, he broke into your room expecting to find me there," was Hilda's tart retort.

"The less you think, the better, Sister, for by this time they've locked him up."

Sister Hilda cast a quick look of dislike at her patient, stopped sobbing and methodically passed into shrieky hysterics. She dropped on the floor and flopped all her four limbs about, successfully overturning a bright bamboo work-basket: the morning gift by which Henry had celebrated his young wife's return to ordinary existence. Something snapped in it, as Sister Hilda continued delightedly to kick and to scream.

Jack Russett's face cleared wonderfully quickly as he came running in. "Oh, I say, shut up!" he cried. "Only reasonable noises, penetrate, you know!" Sister Hilda vouchsafing no intelligible answer, he caught her up bodily and carried her to her own bedroom with a rapidity which left her for fifteen seconds breathless on the bed.

"This water isn't cold enough! I'll get you some colder," he said, jug in hand.

"I'm better," replied the sister, promptly sitting up. "And, young man, whoever you are, you won't throw water in my face, when I'm married to the King of England's cousin."

"I shall if you scream like that," retorted Jack. "And his Majesty will say: 'Oh, thank you for stopping that row.'"

"His Majesty," replied Sister Hilda, greatly relishing the subject, "will know how to protect his own Cousin from insult. Lord, young man, we shouldn't as much as *see* you! When I was nursing Her Grace the Duchess of Tewkesbury, of a boil in Her Grace's throat, there was a powdered menial that ventured to say. 'You

can turn the tap yourself,' to me and Her Grace's daughter, the Right Honorable Countess of——"

"Mrs. Gamp!" said Jack suddenly.

She stopped, nonplussed.

"Ever heard of Dickens, Sister?"

"Profane language to me!" exclaimed the sister, slipping off the bed with very real dignity. "You might at least respect my cloth, young man!"

"Come, Sister: I've walked the hospitals for three years: you needn't try to humbug me. You've no business to go into hysterics with a patient like Mrs. Lomas."

"Well, sir, if you're an English doctor," said Sister Hilda, with a complete change to respectful calm, "you can hear all about me from the great Dr. Russett: many's the time he's told me, he never had a better nurse. And I possess the South African War medal, if you please, sir: I was head of a ward out there. And Dr. Russett is trying at this moment to secure my assistance for his new sanatorium, but I can make my three guineas a week any day, sir"—Sister Hilda tossed up her head—"and my uncle the Alderman advises me to remain free."

"You'll look down on three guineas a week, when you've married the King's cousin," said Jack, moving towards the door, and wondering if the woman was quite in her right mind.

Sister Hilda decided to take these words as a compliment. "I shall patronize all the nursing institutions in Portugee," she said grandly. "My training'll come in most useful. I have my certificates, and I can say the hundred and seventy articles of our Guild without a miss. I should like to know, sir, whether you ever came across another nurse who could do as much as that?"

"I've come across the best and the worst," replied Jack enigmatically, escaping. He had seen a good deal of hospital work, but not his father's. "I don't want you about my place," Dr. Russett had always told him. Nor were his father's cases the ones that would interest him. He preferred acute illness and, above all, surgical help.

An attendant was waiting outside the door; could the English doctor spare a minute for Mrs. Lomas? He was only too glad: there were things he must say to her; in the first place that he was not a great surgeon, only just Dr. Russett's son.

"Dr. Russett!" exclaimed Lucia, as he entered. For one moment he fancied his confession had been forestalled: her next words disproved this. "Dr. Russett has ruined us! Oh, I'm only a human woman: I must say it to somebody! He's murdered my husband. God will require my poor husband's blood at his hands!" Her fingers plucked at her dress; for her voice quavered and broke. "Oh, why did he send us here? And now he——Oh, I don't want to say any more. Stop me! I *won't* say any more! I don't know what I am saying; don't listen to me. Did I say 'murdered?' That was very wrong of me. I meant 'killed!' I may say 'killed.' But I daresay he meant it for the best. Now I've said it, let's forget it, and him! It was such a relief to say it just once, and to someone who'll understand—you're a countryman, you see—I suppose that was it. Now forget! Don't let's ever mention the man's name again. I want to forget him. I want to forget!" She put her hand to her forehead: "I need never again have anything to do with him or with anyone connected with him. Sister Hilda is going home."

"But I also advised you to come here!" cried Jack.

"That is true; do you know, I had entirely forgotten that!"—rather humbling, Mr. Jack!—"Well, the place has done me good."

"For which you can thank Dr. Russett," said Jack—a forlorn hope.

Her brow clouded. "I have no claim on you," she said, with quivering lip. "No claim at all. We only met once before. But we meet here so strangely to-day. I don't know what to do or where to turn? I have nobody to advise me. Will you do so once again? Dr. Vouvray says I must stay here. If I don't, he threatens me with the most fearful of all fates, ten, twelve years of a lingering death! It isn't true, is it? He is doing me good: I feel better. But this can't be true. What

makes him say it? After Dr. Russett I don't know whom to trust." She wrung her hands.

"You could trust Dr. Russett," he retorted, almost angrily, yet he pitied her so, as she lay on her sofa, pretending to sit up.

She looked him in the face. "I can trust you," she said, pushing back, down her throat, suggestions of Russett's commission, and worse. "And, if you will befriend me, just for to-day, do not mention that man's name again. But this thing Dr. Vouvray says, tell me it isn't true!"

"You can only have the poorest idea of my medical capacity," replied Jack, avoiding her gaze.

"You are begging my question—no, you have answered it." She sank back on her sofa. "God will give me strength to nurse my husband. You have seen what he did for Luke Willes."

"How can I answer it?" exclaimed Jack, desperately. "I can only say 'Vouvray is a great doctor: he is doing you good.' No, I can say one thing more: I have told him I will gladly travel with Mr. Lomas to Mentone: I was going to the Riviera, any way!"

"Oh, you mustn't do that for us—you mustn't do that!"

"I'll hand him over to a *good* doctor the moment we get there," added Jack, forlornly smiling. "You must just consider me as a courier—who doesn't speak the language."

"Oh, we cannot—I cannot—" she began lamely, and broke off.

"But there's one thing you really must allow me to say to you," he began, bracing himself for the effort, "Dr. Russett——"

She glanced up at him, so manifestly hurt by his persistence that the three words "is my father" simply died on his lips.

"You forget that I asked you, as a personal favor, not to mention that name again," she said coldly. "It seems such a little thing. I have disagreeable thoughts enough at this moment without remembering Dr. Russett."

Jack felt that, had he finished his sentence, she would have refused his assistance. What a fool he was, in his mistaken candor, not to have realized that sooner. After all, what did

it matter? There was just the day's journey, and he need never meet Lomas or his wife again. At this juncture both he and Lucia were relieved to welcome Tom, the American, who came sheepishly anxious to offer services of any sort with a manifest preference for convoying Lucia to whatever distant destination she might wish to select.

"But this gentleman happens to be going to the Riviera," said Lucia. Tom scowled at such want of tact on the part of this gentleman.

"I forgot to tell you," continued Lucia, turning to Russett. "I know you will say women always ask advice so as not to follow it, but I have quite made up my mind: I cannot stay here." It was much easier to say this, now they were three.

"Then what am *I* to do? I must do something," protested Tom.

"Do you really want to help me? Help me immensely? Then you can take Sister Hilda to a place called Lausanne and put her into the Calais express."

"Thanks," said Tom.

"She insists on hurrying home, and she daren't change, by herself. There will be plenty of nurses on the Riviera, and I really think I could make a fresh effort to get along, once I was rid of Sister Hilda."

"Dear me, she's only a human angel," reflected Jack, with some slight satisfaction.

"To-morrow night, at this hour, Sister Hilda will be speeding Calais-wards in a ladies' compartment of the Paris express," said Tom, manifestly drawing on whatever of the angelic *his* nature might be able to produce.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you! You take such a weight off my mind. But not a 'ladies' compartment,' I think. She may as well enjoy her long journey."

"Yes, she's quite a female human angel," decided Jack.

"I'm afraid you'll think me unkind,"—it was as if she read his thoughts;—"but she so abused ladies' compartments coming out. She said there were always men in women's clothes in them,

and there was no fun in men in women's clothes. I feel quite bright at thought of all your kindness,"—neither young man deemed himself specially flattered—"My husband will recover in the sunshine."

"Why Mentone?" pleaded Tom. "Egypt would be much jollier. I should like to accompany you to Egypt."

"Mentone is the first warm place. And my mother is there or soon will be. We have telegraphed to her."

"Well, that's hopeless," acquiesced Tom, "and Vouvray told me Mr. Lomas *must* travel with a doctor. Stick to Vouvray. He's a genius. If he ordered Millie to the North Pole, I'd take her!"

"Yes, you wouldn't let her go alone," said Lucia, without looking at Jack.

"Of course I wouldn't." So there being no more left to be said after that, Lucia bade the young men good-night and wrote a few words to Vouvray.

"Of course," said Vouvray, laying down the note, "the woman goes. The man would have stayed." He sat gazing at the portrait of the daughter who was taking so long to die at Geneva. "I am not a man: I am a doctor!" he said presently, and sinking his head upon his hands, he groaned.

"*Monsieur a sommeil?*" asked a smooth voice at his side. He glanced up to see Joseph Labry, his right hand, his factotum, his comfort and stay—white apron, blue cheeks, shaven crown—the chief bather and masseur.

"More than a hundred doctors unto me," says his master.

"Joseph, I believe you listen at my door!" exclaimed Vouvray.

"I had knocked," was the quiet reply.

"Joseph, do you know why men die?"

"Because they cease to live, *monsieur le docteur*."

"There are three reasons: foolishness, wickedness, infection. The first two sense must combat: the third science."

"The first two, then, will ever remain," said Joseph.

"You are a pessimist, Joseph. I fight foolishness: the philosophers fight wickedness. The laboratory must fight infection."

"And the bath," said Josephe.

"True—up to a point. In the days of Louis the Fourteenth—do you know who that was?"

"But—evidently: *le grand monarque!*"

"And Louis the Fifteenth?"

"Assuredly—*le gai monarque!*"

"He was always bored. Vice bores when made easy. Well, in those days everybody died of the small-pox: it was the one fear of prince and peasant, especially prince—who dies of the small-pox now?"

"My mother-in-law did," said Josephe.

"She was an exception."

"She had it as an infant. I cannot exactly say she died of it, but she had it so badly that all her children were born pitted."

Vouvray stretched a slow hand towards a huge note-book, a folio, that lay on his desk. "I am never quite sure, Josephe," he said hesitatingly, "whether you have really had all your interesting medical experiences, or whether you think they will please me?"

"This one is a fact," said the imperturbable Josephe.

"Well, at any rate inoculation has stopped the small-pox," answered Vouvray, writing. "It, and it alone, is going to conquer infection."

"'Tis wonderful, but 'tis risky," remarked Josephe, with downcast eyes. "A cousin of mine was inoculated for the scarlet-fever—"

"Not the scarlet fever, Josephe," interposed the doctor.

"The yellow fever?"

"That, at least, is possible."

"The yellow fever. But the doctor took the wrong bottle and give him hydrophobia."

"Josephe!"

"Gave him the hydrophobia serum, *monsieur le docteur*. He did not take the disease, but all the rest of his life he growled like a dog."

Vouvray poised his pen in air.

"True, I have heard he was always growly," said Josephé without lifting his eyes.

"Where did this cousin live, Josephé?"

"Somewhere in South America," replied the wary Labry.

Vouvray pushed back the book. "I don't think we'll put down that last," he said. He rose to his feet and with one sweep of his arm, embracing all his treasures: "Have you any idea," he demanded, "what these are worth, Josephé?"

"Yes," answered Josephé.

"Nonsense: you can't have the faintest."

"I beg monsieur's pardon, if I say it. Far better than monsieur. They are worth what I have insured them for, piece by piece."

"You have insured them?"

The servant moved not a muscle of face or limb, except such as he needed for gentle speech. "I have insured them: oh, monsieur pays the insurance money. But monsieur thinks of the establishment all day in the minutest particulars: I have to look after monsieur's private affairs."

"And as what, pray, do you book the doubtless considerable premium?"

"As charity," replied Josephé coolly. "*Charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même*. Did monsieur not always say I might give?"

"You have robbed the poor, Josephé."

The servant shrugged his shoulders. "Monsieur gives away far too much, anyhow. Monsieur should amass."

"For whom?" asked Vouvray.

The picture, on the table, seemed to gaze at both servant and master. A sudden moisture came into Josephé's dark eyes.

"How much do you pay?" Vouvray's voice showed his interest.

"Six hundred francs, *monsieur le docteur*. One per thousand."

"Six hun—do you mean to say"—the voice thrilled—"that these things are worth six hundred thousand francs?"

"But yes, monsieur. Now, the little Millet yonder—the water-color—the glâneuse—the *commissaire-priseur* from Paris

valued it at eighty thousand francs. It is the same, he said, as one of three in the Louvre, that were bought for half a million."

"True—true—I know!" said Vouvray, reflectively nodding his head. Then he broke into a shout of triumph. "Hurrah!" he cried. "So be it. It is this I wanted to tell you. Josephe, I am going to sell them all!"

"Impossible!"—voice and face were no longer the well-known Josephe's. "*Monsieur est-il—*" A break—an effort—"*Malade?*" said Josephe.

"All are going, all! They will form a fund for the battle against consumption, a prize for the man who discovers the serum. Say nothing, Josephe," he made the gesture his servant never resisted, a swift closing of the fist. "I had no idea it was so large an amount. So much the better."

"But monsieur cannot live without them," faintly pleaded the servant.

"Better than my fellow-creatures can live without lungs," replied Vouvray. "Go now, I wanted to tell you. The thing is done. I shall keep my 'Hope.'"

But somehow, when the whole collection had been packed off to the Hôtel des Ventes in Paris, it was discovered that Millet's "Glâneuse" still remained behind. Vouvray was furious with Josephe, and he tore down the forlorn picture from its prominent place on the desolate wall. It now hangs in a Chicago pork-butcher's drawing-room, on end, "so the bending figure kinder stands, you see."

CHAPTER XX

THERE is a comic theory that modern travel has been rendered comfortable. It may even find supporters amongst a few of the many who yearly experience the unaltered hurly-burly of that rail-route which patient French humor has re-christened "Pour La Mort." There are people who enjoy free fights in narrow corridors or fierce altercations over seats reserved weeks beforehand but erroneously numbered or twice bestowed. There are mild male creatures in plenty who rather like being treated as baggage by baggages; there are cynic oldsters, in any case, who realize with relish into what dirty hands the money of the twentieth century has passed, and with what a mockery of luxury the new tourist has to find himself expensively content. And the most jaded makes, year by year, the not disagreeable discovery that there still exist sensations which no frequency can cause entirely to pall, such as are caused by the usual lost or smashed luggage, the invariable missed connection, the inevitable blunder about tickets, the ever threatening squabble over windows, cigars and—worst of all—flowers, the hundred never neglected opportunities for mismanagement by officials and misconduct by fellow-passengers which constitute the perils and palpitations of a journey, say from Paris or Geneva to Nice.

This novel experience came to Jack Russett, intensified a thousand times by the horrors of sickness. Fortunately he possessed a calm British head and—still more satisfactory—a certain amount of cool British cheek. When, somewhere in the middle of the night, he produced sufficient hot milk for a sleeping-draught of trional, Lucia expressed some of the admi-

ration she felt. "Oh, I routed up the cook," said Jack, "in his what d'ye call it?—galley."

"You have put him to sleep," replied Lucia softly (and the "him" certainly did not refer to the poor cook). "He was suffering so. No, not for me, thanks! What should we have done without you? How very bad his breathing has suddenly become!" Her own case had been so different: when she first grew tired without tiring herself, she had not understood at all. For months she had felt ill-health deepening upon her, untraceable, unfightable, resistless. On Henry's account, then, she felt much more hopeful: the sicknesses that come so suddenly often as suddenly go. Her cousin, the young fellow whom they had sent to Davos, had written of a "hotel" full of young people, all full of gaiety, all picking up. She bent across the sleeper:

"It is young people they send to the high altitudes?"

"Yes, they send young people a good deal."

"Chest complaints are so much more dangerous at that age?"

"Yes, they are often more dangerous."

"The warm air—I can feel it already—will do my husband a lot of good."

"Yes, it ought to do him a lot of good." He scowled internally, if such a feat be performable: he was fated to speak to her in half-lies from the first. She, glancing from one face to the other, resented with irrational resentment the bright strength of "the boy" in the grey morning light beside the strained features, the wrinkled forehead, grown suddenly careworn, the pallid moustache of the middle-aged man.

"He is still in his prime," she said angrily to herself. "The sunny South will set him up."

The sunny South, for the traveler southwards, begins at Valence, not because there is any logic in that, but simply because the fact cannot be gainsaid. There is nothing southern in Lyons—still less in Vienne—but the whole roll of the Roman Province rolls to meet you in "Valence!" Orange—a golden vision!—immediately follows: Avignon, Tarascon, all the rest of it, a

jumble and blaze of bright colors and dusty grey. The accent changes of the men who call out the station-names with a rich, fat relish. The people's eyes change, full of liquid flame. The carriage windows fall open, letting in the soft southern perfumes. The sun slowly lightens great stretches of stony soil with their far-straggling olives and wild masses of thyme and rosemary. The whole scene, under the new, strange light grows first silver, then deeply golden. A mirage and a reality. *Miramas!*

Jack Russett sat looking out upon all this delightful novelty. He wished there was only brightness in the world, as there used to be six years ago. As you grew older, you got face to face with a lot of suffering you never had bothered about before. A medical man more than anybody. It was true, as his father often said, that he had been almost superfluously perfected as a doctor in the usual theoretic way. Paris, Vienna, Berlin: he had seen them all from a "clinical" point of view. But suffering, examined professionally, always remains more or less theoretic: were it not so, a physician's life would prove unlivable. It is a difficult life, at the best: of all the professions medicine soonest wears out a man, body and heart. Jack Russett looked back on the cloudless days of Harrow and Cambridge:—if there were clouds, they were no bigger than a boy's hand, and didn't grow. He had found his long student-training entirely engrossing: he had seen the finest *tours de force* performed by the most skilful operators of our day: he had inspected the most interesting "material," as we are called; he had believed in the success of the operations and the manipulation of the materials, with discipular enthusiasm, as was his right. Gradually he himself had been invited to do the customary smaller things—tracheotomy, and so on and so on—on any number of available corpses, but he had not as yet reached the inevitable stage of personal responsibility, uncontrolled by the hospital "Chief," face to face with an emergency, in the living human frame. The step is a terrible one; it remains unforgotten in every doctor's life. The first "danger!" Resolutely, but unwisely, Jack Russett had refused to cut up, for his own gradual instruction, healthy brutes. Natur-

ally this eccentric attitude had caused some unpleasantness, but he was the great Dr. Russett's otherwise popular son.

A man he had liked and chummed with in Vienna, who was going to make a "speciality" of revolver wounds, used to lock himself up in a barn with a dozen mongrel curs and a couple of revolvers and to empty the revolvers right and left into the flying, shrieking animals. Afterwards he lengthily cured some of them: these did for another time.

Henry Lomas was Jack Russett's first undivided charge. At present, while the sick man lay dozing, there was little to be done, but any moment might see a fresh outbreak—a quite possibly fatal outbreak—of hemorrhage: and then Lucia would remember Luke Willes.

"Poof!" he said, when he had thought himself into a fidget thus far. And then he sensibly resolved to fidget no more: he got out at Marseilles station in search of a cup of coffee, a breath of calming air and a reply telegram from Mrs. Blandrey's customary Mentone address. He found all three.

"Yes, my mother is at Mentone and has taken rooms for us in the hotel," said Lucia, "I am very glad!"

"So am I," he answered from the bottom of his heart. "I shall go for a week to Monte Carlo. They say that's the sight to see. I suppose you've often been here before?"

"Never. My mother didn't approve of the Riviera for children, still less for young girls. And my husband has always put off coming." She turned to the window. They sat silently watching the increasing glories of that wondrous road: the flower-and-fruit-filled curves along the dark-blue water, until the bright villas thickened around them, and slowly, past the teeming sister "health-resorts," the long train dragged its weary length into the last: Mentone.

"I told you so," said Mrs. Blandrey, on the platform. "Didn't I tell you so? I suppose you saw how right I was and came away. But I must say you are looking wonderfully well, Lucia. And so is Henry."

"Yes, mamma. Henry has a bad cough and mustn't speak."

"And who is the agreeable young man who appears to have charge of your luggage?"

"A doctor who came with us from Peysonnax. His name is Brass. I believe he is a well-known surgeon."

"Is he? Well, Lucia, I do hope you won't feel your nerves out here, dearest, that would spoil all Henry's fun. He can have plenty."

"Hush, mamma, oh hush! Henry is very ill—I will tell you all presently."

At the hotel—the big, the flaring, the palm-girt, the pink-and-white awning hung, the sunlit, the glorious Hôtel des Deux Mondes—at the hotel, their long-yearned-for destination and resting place, the utterly unexpected befell them. For Lucia, in her anxiety to get away from the draught said something about her husband being ill. The smart manager cast a quick glance—a connoisseur's glance—at Henry.

"I am sorry, but we do not take invalids," he said.

Mrs Blandrey stood, aghast, in the entrance hall.

"It is quite against the rules of the house!" added the manager, painfully smiling.

"Invalids?" exclaimed Mrs. Blandrey. "And the person below me who coughs all night? And the Russian lady who died last week?"

The manager knew not of a gentleman who coughed, still less of a Persian lady who had died. Madame was under a complete misapprehension. Nobody died at Mentone.

"I shall leave to-morrow," said Mrs. Blandrey, furious.

Madame would do as she pleased: they had fifty applications. He called out to a clerk that number twenty-seven would be vacant to-morrow and turned on his heel with the insolence of an hotel keeper whose house is full. Jack Russett, following, got some rough help out of him. "You cannot do better," said a jewelled lady in the office "than to take the sick gentleman to Madame Burlubaux." So, after the usual scene with that brute blackguard, the Riviera cab-driver, the travelers found themselves deposited, more dead than alive, at the door of a French

doctor's widow, who kept a small pension in the Avenue Jules Grévy. Mrs Blandrey laughed at Jack's hot face.

"Can't you stand being swindled?" she said. "Nonsense! Why did you come here?"

The swift scramble, then, was ended: a fresh haven of dingy rest received Lucia's weary soul. Not three weeks had passed since she still lived the tranquil home life of Beechlands, ignorant of doctors, specialists, health-resorts and cures.

"Good-bye, then," said Jack Russett. "Good-bye. No, don't thank me; I was coming South any how." He was eager to get away, as he could not remain. And he said the one thing he had made up his mind to leave unsaid. "You mustn't be angry with Dr. Russett."

"I know it is unreasonable," she answered gravely, "but oh, a doctor should be omniscient or——"

"Or?"

"Oh, nothing—nonsense."

"Not a doctor at all."

"No, no—you see, that is nonsense. You said he had been your teacher: do you ever meet him now?"

"I do."

"Then don't tell him about us. I suppose it isn't his fault, yet he—might—be—sorry."

CHAPTER XXI

“**A**H, but invalids are my aspiration! I adore invalids!” cried Madame Burlubaux. She was lanky and loose-limbed, with drooping garments and an upward glance. Her slippers flapped, down-at-heel.

Mrs. Blandrey looked round. “I could not stop in this place a day!” she said. “How queer you have grown, Lucia, so fussy about both your healths! But I shall certainly change my hotel.”

Madame Burlubaux was not acquainted with the English tongue—*ah, non, malheureusement!*—but she caught the tone of the elegant speaker and noticed her gingerly attitudes.

“The hotels, ah, they take not the invalids that show themselves!” exclaimed Madame Burlubaux. “Monsieur held his handkerchief to his mouth, *viola!* And there were residents of course standing by—ah, did I not say it? The one thing that never occurs in an hotel it is a *visibly* sick arrival or a death! But here! It has ever been my sacred mission to tend the suffering! I follow in the footsteps of my ‘*pauvre chéri*.’ He did not believe in ‘infection;’ another time I will tell you about that. Ah, from morning to evening—and all night—le Docteur Burlubaux would have tended Mister——?”

“Lomas.”

“*C’est ça*. I fly to procure you a hot-water bottle.”

“That woman is manifestly a pest,” said Mrs Blandrey. She repeated the words to Jack Russett, as she walked away with him from the dull little house. “You cannot imagine, doctor, how all this brings back to me the terrible experience I had with my first poor husband at Taormina. He died there of typhoid;

we were on our wedding journey"—proper sympathy on Jack's countenance, but modified by consideration of "first"—"Henry's case is of course in no way alarming. In a day or two he will feel better, and then they can come to my new hotel. I think I shall go to the 'Palatial New Palace.' The name sounds promising, and I hear they've a telephone in every room. That's *their* new feature. I like hotels. I wish we could induce my daughter not to 'listen to herself so,' as the French say. You must know as well as I, when a woman once begins to do that, her men-folk simply—loathe her."

"Mr. Lomas will have to be very careful," said Jack, "he is seriously ill."

She stood still: she glanced sideways at her companion. "What is the matter with him?" she asked in a tremulous voice.

"He has caught a bad cold—it has settled on his lungs," answered Jack, with slow selection of terms.

"A bad cold," she repeated thoughtfully: she took a few steps in silence. Then she added: "His lungs!" They were walking along the dust-covered, dust-clouded avenue, in the dust-obscured sunlight, under the dusty trees. At every ten steps a motor-car tore past them. The place was lively with overdressed tourists between the bright shop-windows, and the loud hotels. From the Jardin Public came the music of the afternoon band. Loiterers were everywhere in a Babel of languages and noisy noises from the noisiest population in the world. The constant pistol-shooting of a hundred whips—that most persistent of all Riviera obsessions—rang out sharp above the music and all the rest of the clang and clatter, rang out above the sustained roar of the sea. Jack Russett gazed with delight at the novel and lovely scene. They had reached the corner by the gardens. Between the palm-trees he could see the wide shimmer of sapphire water: to his left stretched the slow rise of flower-beds and statues, as fore-ground to the circle of grey mountains, hotels and villages, the beauties of the Annunziata and of St. Agnès.

"By George!" he said, slowly twisting round. She looked at him. The music was banging the "Mattchiche." A news-

boy, among all the crowd of idlers, was shrieking *Le Matin!* But the last words she had spoken lingered on the air. They are terrible words at Mentone.

"The lungs!" she repeated in a tone that took his breath away. "Is it—don't say it is—consumption?"

He nodded.

"Oh, how awful!" she said, shuddering. She hid, for a moment, her face in her hands: immediately she steadied herself. "But I thought," she stammered, "I had always understood——"

A man, over-dressed like all the others—striped flannels, red tie, yellow boots—was approaching her, hat (panama) in hand. "Oh, come away! Come away! I *must* ask you—!" she cried, laying her hand nervously on Jack's arm—but already the man with the Panama stood in front of them, bowing and smiling.

"One beholds you no more at the music," he said with pretty foreign intonation. "You break, lovely lady, your word, and our hearts!"

"I was here only yesterday," she answered, exasperated. "My daughter has just arrived with her husband——"

"And this is Monsieur! I am delighted."

"No, no, Count. Pray leave us for a moment. I must speak to this gentleman alone."

"But certainly!" The French Count made a swift and vain attempt to banish from his mobile countenance all appearance of offended dignity. As he stalked majestically aside, the lady swept after him.

"It is something of the greatest importance," she pleaded. "Business."

"Business!—but certainly." He inspected, with courteous curiosity, her agitated face and manner: Mrs. Blandrey's acquaintances were not accustomed to seeing her disturbed. "Forgive me: I did not imagine that any one had business at Mentone."

Mrs. Blandrey angrily dragged Jack away to the sea-terrace.

"Not that it's really quieter here," she said. "It isn't quiet

anywhere in Mentone. Only dull. Tell me now—tell me *quick!*—*women* don't catch consumption—do they?—after the age of thirty-five?"

"They may," he replied, amazed.

She uttered a little cry. "Oh, how awful! Oh, the brute! the brute! the brute!"

"That's father again!" thought Jack.

But Mrs Blandrey hastened to give him another explanation. "I wouldn't have stayed here a day," she said, "not an hour, if I hadn't felt perfectly safe. It's a terrible place, you can see it is! When I first came to the Riviera, people didn't know about infection, but two seasons ago, when I came here again, they did. And any one can see of course that this must be a hotbed of microbes. So I sent at once for the best doctor—the hotel recommended him—and I asked him to examine my chest. He said I hadn't the slightest tendency!"

"That's all right!" cried hearty Jack.

"I beg your pardon. I have little need for the gentlemen of your profession: this one was the first I had consulted for years. But I felt that a tendency meant nothing: what could he know about my future tendencies? I pressed him to say at what age people caught consumption: at last he said: 'Not after thirty-five.'" She had poured all this out in one quivering scream. Now, leaning her hand on the parapet, she repeated: "Not after thirty-five. What did he mean"—she turned violently on Russett—"by 'not after thirty-five?'"

"I can't say," answered Jack, vexed, perplexed.

"He was an old man, more than twice your age. He must have spoken from vast experience."

"I have no experience: I dare say he was right," comforted Jack.

"I stayed on and I came back, just because he had said that," continued Mrs. Blandrey feverishly. "Just look at the place!" She pointed to the rolling clouds of dust. "How many motors have passed—do you think?—during the five minutes we have stood talking here? Forty? Fifty? They never stop, day or

night, along this dust-laden coast! And you doctors—oh, you doctors;—write up in the streets—*these* streets—‘Phthisis is catching! Do not expectorate!’ Catching!”—her frightened voice rose to a shriek—“Catching! ’Tis the dust that carries the microbe. The microbe which is everywhere, everywhere here!” She turned to the spreading sea: with her flimsy little handkerchief pressed tight against her nostrils, trying to breathe through it, trying not to breathe, trying to blow back imaginary death-germs from her trembling lips, suddenly frenzied, by the catastrophe of Henry’s sudden infection, in the thick haze, like the grit of a long railway journey, the deadly, disease-laden Riviera dust.

“I shall fly away at once to Monte Carlo,” she spluttered. “One is certainly safer there. At least, there are far fewer invalids. Oh, you doctors! Why do you *tell* us these things? You are powerless to help us. We were far happier as long as we didn’t know.” Her eyes wandered to the bright crowd about the stand. “Look there!” she said, pointing beneath the palm trees. The band was clanking “La Paloma.”

“Very jolly they look, and they’re all ages,” cheerfully expostulated Jack.

“Am I responsible for other fools?” she retorted. “My own wicked recklessness is enough for me.” She glanced desperately across the road, right and left. “There’s a tea place over yonder,” she said, “with private rooms. Come! Come at once! I can’t endure this agony a moment longer. Oh. I’ve always been afraid of consumption: one sees it here everywhere! It’s horrible. And I cough so much! But every one does that: it’s the dust. Any doctor can tell—can’t he?—by just listening? Come!”

He followed her across the road, in semi-wonderment only, for even the youngest doctor soon learns not to be surprised at the strangest demonstration of bodily fear. Of course he pitied her, medically, the well-dressed, self-possessed woman of the world, suddenly gone to pieces, shaking like an aspen. Her accusation was, he felt, not undeserved: his unwise, his half-wise profession had of late years filled general existence with popularized terrors it was powerless to assuage.

"Tea!" said Mrs. Blandrey, entering a gaudy green and gold *Pâtisserie*, "Isn't it ready? Then make some!" She stood beating her fingers against the window pane till the woman brought the tray.

"*Dois-je apporter des gâteaux?*" asked the woman. Mrs. Blandrey almost banged the door in her face and began hastily fumbling at buttons and bows.

"Queer things happen at Mentone," said the apple-cheeked Swiss waitress to the lady at the counter.

"Your lungs are as good as mine," declared Jack after careful auscultation.

Mrs. Blandrey gasped. "But are you sure? Quite sure?"

"I think so," replied Jack, reminiscent of the great Vouvray.

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Blandrey fervently. She began re-adjusting her toilet. "Have a cup of tea!" she said. She poured one out for herself, drank it with leisurely satisfaction and prepared to leave. Also she laid a louis down on the table beside her. "My consultation!" she said.

Jack Russett, rather red, slipped the coin into his trousers pocket, deeming he would appear a still greater fool, if he did not. It saved the situation. The fee, by-the-by, was the first he had ever earned. He dropt it, red-hot, a few days later at Monte Carlo on "impair."

"And, now, I leave at once," said Mrs. Blandrey, drawing on her gloves. "I shall never come back to Mentone." She went out, to the counter, and began eating *choux à la crème*.

"But your daughter!"

She looked at him curiously, looked—it may be thought—at the thrill in his voice. "My daughter has no need of me," she said dryly. "She is plentifully occupied with her own health and her husband's."

"She is indeed," answered Jack.

There was enough recrimination in his voice to make her feel justly offended. "We have all our own ideas of diversion," she said bridling. "The most fashionable is health, but it has never been mine."

"Mr. Lomas is dying," replied Jack.

She shuddered slightly, dropping on the floor a great flop of her *chou*. She thought him exceedingly ill-mannered and excessive. "If I could be of any use," she said slowly, "it would of course be different. I didn't run away from Harry." With that she bowed to him, very coldly, and passed out.

At the tea-shop door stood the Count. "Ah!" he said, "we meet accidentally!"—and he escorted her back to the hotel.

"I am leaving to-night for Monte Carlo," said Mrs. Blandrey, red and angry.

"Indeed? With your children?"

"No: my 'children' stay here. One of my 'children' is a great deal older than I am—as old as you."

The smart Frenchman bit his moustache. "And this young gentleman whom, in a cake-shop, you treat to—to your company, he also remains?"

"No, I believe he goes to Monte Carlo. He is a doctor, out for a holiday."

"A doctor! An exceedingly attractive doctor!" cried the Frenchman, not so red but quite as angry. "*Vous me compromettez, madame!*"

She leaped at the right to be annoyed with somebody. "Wait till I am Madame la Comtesse de la Rochefeuilletas," she said. "I have not yet made up my mind by any means: have you?"

He looked away at his own lean face in a shop-mirror.

"You see!" she said. "He tells me my daughter's husband is dangerously ill."

"Ill. I am truly grieved. Can I do anything?"

("I shall do it," reflected Mrs. Blandrey, "I can manage this man at any time.") Aloud she said: "His wife is devoted to him: he will have every attention. I shall be close by, should they need me."

"But I thought you lived here to avoid the name of 'Monte Carlo?'"

"So I did. And the expense."

"You are right. We are not all adventurers, not even the titled.
Why not take the invalid to Cannes?"

"Cannes? It is miles away from the tables."

"I don't like to think you come here for the tables."

"Does anybody in his senses come for anything else?"

CHAPTER XXII

“**M**ONSIEUR L’HOMASSE will recover here—all recover!” cried Madame Burlubaux. Her voice was loud: her manner so convinced as to be convincing. “And you, Madame, will climb up to Roquebrunel!” Lucia loved the woman for speaking thus.

“The glorious climate—it would rouse the dead! And Monsieur is nowhere near dead, not he! Has he got his *bouillotte*?” The landlady fussed about the rooms: she had hands that were made for fussing. Nothing in those three rooms was not dirty or dilapidated, not ready to fall to pieces or to come undone, when touched. The landlady slipped about, touching and turning things. There were smells of all sorts, combined and undivided: foods, medicines, cheap perfumes, smells of everything but clean air. Lucia had flung open a grey window on the whirling dust-clouds of the avenue: she had as hastily closed it again. A slipshod, lank girl, like the mother, but with younger pretensions to elegance, such as a net over her forehead, came inquisitively staring round the door and extended a three-cornered note.

“Euphrosyne! My daughter!” said Madame with ready pathos. “Little Microbe her dear father called her—*pauvre chéri*—but of that I will tell you some other time!” Lucia was reading her mother’s farewell.

“As soon as Henry is a little better, you must join me at Monte Carlo,” wrote Mrs. Blandrey, “Mentone isn’t healthy. Especially let me warn you against a lying doctor, called Gaine. The one who came with you seems to me very inadequate. I should not trust any of these health-resort doctors, myself.”

Lucia laid her mother’s letter down on the table and requested

the landlady to leave her to herself. She had expected much help, if not from Mrs. Blandrey, certainly from Summers. She was now quite alone, unable to move about the room without pain, boxed up in these miserable, foreign lodgings with a sick man, to whom the doctors forbade any effort except a long railway journey. Step by step, had she been brought thus low by the impassive Æsculapius, the fitful ruler of our fearful fates. There is no ruiner of modern lives such as he.

When Lucia's lips began to tremble, she snatched at work for somebody else. She now quickly resumed some sewing, into which a paid sempstress might perhaps have stitched neater stitches, but not more kindly thoughts. She must write and ask Dr. Rook to see that the poor erring mother——

That reminded her!—the work dropped from her shaky fingers: a letter, still unread, from Busk had been put into her hand as the sleigh was leaving Peysonnax. She now looked for it in her dressing-bag: a little book came dropping out with it, her inseparable little book of sympathetic devotion. Is it quite fair to ask its name? There are secrets we ought to respect in every woman's soul. Well, so be it. Pascal.

The old gardener's sprawly epistle was full of home-items, told with his usual protest and apology: the veranda-blinds that wanted mending and ought to be as good as new, a leak where there couldn't, by rights, be any water, a sick chicken that Providence ought to have kept in health. Busk never felt shy about the shortcomings of Providence. "If the Young Coaching Shiny won't eat," wrote Busk, in unreproduceable orthography, "'tis nobody's fault but her own or her Maker's. Mrs. Corry says Rob is well and happy: as for 'happy' I don't know as he's told her.

"A person has been to inspect the grounds, as was welcome, and the house, as was refused without a order." Two appeals for charity were enclosed, with frank comment: "drinks, but not the baby," and the "doctor says 'tis his vitals dance," and the question was raised, whether Susan's feckless husband should be allowed to paint the barn? "It don't want painting, but *he* does.

And he says you said it did." Busk liked and respected his master (unwillingly): Lucia he (unwillingly) loved and revered. But no philosopher can ever quite forget that women are women. Poor things!

His own wife had somewhat recovered from her stroke: she was able to get about again, and cook. He himself ascribed her cure to a Rheumatism-Pad (price five shillings, cost three-pence, says Dr. Rook): the cousin from over the river had exorcised her: Mrs. Busk thanked the Lord.

Lucia laid down the letter and gazed out at the falling shadows. She saw Beechlands. And her thoughts, in this ruin of her life, were of a mild saying in the "Pénsees," how that sickness is the right and natural state for a Christian, bringing home to him his weakness, his transient cares, his dependency—worlds away from our Yankee Christian Science, or the modern evangel of the Blatant Body that knows no Christianity at all!

"But the poor people need me—oh, they need me! they need me!" she thought. "What will become of the poor people if Beechlands is only an Asylum?" She crossed to the half-open door to listen to Henry's labored breathing. His condition, when not suffocated, was one of torpor: he preferred to lie solitary, gasping. It seemed as if he breathed more easily, when there was no one else in the room. A blank-note lay beside him, on which he must express his wishes, but he pushed it wearily from him: only once he wrote: "Rest: you must rest!" And once: "Thank Dr. Russett." She thought his mind was wandering. He meant Jack.

"Ah, Madame!" said the landlady, in the doorway as always. Lucia turned and said she needed nothing, but the landlady was of those kind of people who never can conceive you don't need *them*.

"I have come," said Madame Burlubaux, stepping inside, "to comfort you a little. Consumption is not infectious: do not believe it! You will not catch it from your husband, not you!"

Lucia sank trembling on a sofa. "Consumption?" she repeated faintly.

"But yes! *La tuberculose!* I had a young couple in these

rooms here all last season: the husband, he would come and sit with me and cry for fear, cry, the big booby! In vain did I comfort *him*: but women are different. In vain did I tell him le Docteur Burlubaux had swallowed a tinful of germs."

"Germs?" repeated Lucia, perplexed.

"Surely!" Madame Burlubaux sat down. "When the germ-craze first came up twenty years ago, Le Docteur Burlubaux, of the Academy of Marseilles, he said: 'It is folly! The germ is not the disease!' The Professor Pettenkofer—Madame has heard talk of him?"

"No," said Lucia, unabashed.

"He was an immense scientist—a Prussian, but such things cannot always be avoided—he said the same. He ate slices of bread and cholera microbes, and my husband, he swallowed a tinful of tubercles!"

"That was brave," said Lucia.

"Brave! Ah, you say well! Were we not—he and I—ancient soldiers!" Madame Burlubaux threw up her long arms and tried to look like an heraldic eagle. "In the army of Algeria, against the Arabs, we had fought, he and I! Believe me, madame, the worst microbe is harmless compared with the Touareg. It is man kills—his enemy, his friend, and himself!" She waved her hands in mid-air. "In the presence of the whole Academy of Marseilles he devoured them—Le Docteur Burlubaux. 'You are ruining my land that I adore,' he said, 'my beautiful Midi with your babble of infection: see here!'" Madame Burlubaux gulped. "He would call his sweet Euphrosyne '*Microbe d'Amour*:' 'My cabbage, she infecteth nobody,' he said."

"Yes," replied Lucia, trying to understand.

"He fought to the end, but what availed it?" Madame Burlubaux wiped away a tear. "When he was dying—he was run over by a motor-car—" Madame Burlubaux's voice quivered—"His last words were: 'Vive Pettenkofer!' Ah, think of it: a French soldier dying with '*Vive un Prussien!*' on his lips." Madame Burlubaux sobbed aloud.

"He left the combat to me; I continue it," she stuttered, "all

here in Mentone know how I despise their foolish precautions. Dust? I believe not in dust!" She drew a long, bony finger along a side-table and stuck it in her mouth. "See here, how I suck their dust! I laugh at it. I!"

"My husband was quite well," said Lucia, vaguely seeking for light.

"And he caught cold—*viola!*" cried the landlady. "He has been in the cold—a chill—a damp to his feet!—shall I get you a *bouillotte?*"

"Thank you: mine is still hot," said Lucia quickly.

"It was the whole doctrine of le Docteur Burlubaux: 'Warm feet and a warm heart!' Ah, medicine is beautifully simple for the thinker! 'A warm heart and warm feet!' he would say. Nature had provided him both. He was gouty."

"Indeed," said Lucia.

"Yes. Your husband has come from the snow to the sun: he will recover. Our beautiful climate, it raises the dead."

"You believe," said Lucia, "that such hemorrhage is caused by a chill."

"Believe? Does a man like le Docteur Burlubaux, of the Academy of Marseilles, believe? He knows!" A bell rang down stairs. The landlady rose. "That, doubtless is the great Dr. Globowsky. You will need a good Physician, Madame?"

"Not just yet," answered Lucia, bewildered.

"Better now than too late," said the landlady, in the doorway and the draught, as long as possible.

But Lucia wanted to get away, wanted to get to Henry, wanted to ask him a question, wanted to ask it at once: she couldn't wait. She got the little writing-slab and put it into his hand. He was not allowed to use his right arm,—only scribble a very few letters laboriously with his left.

"Henry," she asked, in a throbbing voice, "did you do the air-cure at Peysonnax?"

He merely nodded.

"Did you——" She stopped. Into the brightly hopeful look of the consumptive had come a sudden flicker of distress.

"I am so glad," she said firmly, "because, that, of course, will have strengthened your chest. Nothing could have been better as a preparation for this illness than that." Henry had felt for the pencil. He wrote: "Does the doctor say that?" She looked him in the eyes; she had never had occasion to lie to him or to any one before. In the fading light her whole neck grew purple.

"Yes," she said. And she went out on to the little sitting-room balcony, to cool her burning cheeks.

It was true, then. All the strain after health, for her sake, had resulted in this: her husband lay dying, murdered. And Luke Willes, at home, had "got his legs." Does the Judge of all the Earth do right?

Of the dangers of the Riviera sunset—largely a fiction, for the climate changes like a kaleidoscope all through the day—Lucia had never heard. She merely perceived that the glare had gone down, that the whirlwind of dust was thinning, one motor now shrieking by where twenty had shrieked before. For the Riviera motors have automatic screechers (so-called sirens!) that ululate, a legalized Pandemonium, all along the road.

Over the far stretch of deep-blue ocean, that showed in great sheets of color between the tall, white houses of the esplanade, the soft southern evening deepened in a purple and violet haze. Broad folds of calm color, mauve, lilac, steel-grey, rolled noiselessly lower, blotting out the long brilliance in a hush of approaching sleep. Immense rose, now visibly closing in, the great dome of transparent sky. And, as it darkened, solidified, the pale lights came out in it, responsive to the yellow lights below. Strange foreign sounds and scents were everywhere. And the chilled air grew balmy again. Suddenly the forlorn strangeness of it all overpowered Lucia. She had overestimated her small strength. "Luke Willes," she murmured, hardly knowing why she spoke, or thought, the words, but dimly feeling all her misery, and, still more, her husband's tragic fate, thrown out into relief against them. She sank down against the balcony railing in the momentary abandonment of despair.

A sullen figure that had stood on the esplanade, by a street-

corner, gazing now at the uninteresting horizon, now across to the boulevard—this solitary, limp figure all at once shaped itself, in the twilight, manly and energetic, and with brisk, echoing step walked away, down the empty street, towards the dark building, the balcony, the fluttering white flag of distress.

"The young doctor, to inquire again, before the night!" said the sympathetic landlady, discreetly receding from the door she had flung open with an unexpected bang. She hurried down stairs and abused the door to Euphrosyne. "It is alive," she cried. "It leaped from my hand. Astonishing, how in this house things leap."

"Your lodgers will not leap," replied the indolent "*Microbe d'amour*," who spent more than half the day arranging her hair, unbecomingly, before various mirrors. "As for me, I love not *les mourants*. *Ni les malades*."

"Strange child of your parents!" said Madame Burlubaux. "As for me, I can take an interest in nothing, unless it is diseased." And, thoughtfully, she drew a finger along the dusty sideboard and popped it into her mouth.

Lucia meanwhile lay against the balustrade. As the door banged, she endeavored to stagger to her feet. Already Russett was beside her. She dashed her hand, dazed, across her eyes.

"It is nothing," she said. "I thought you had left for Monte Carlo?"

"I missed my train. You must——"

She stared at him vaguely. "There are so many trains."

"I missed them all," he said impetuously, "and a good thing, too. You must come inside at once."

Nothing could have braced her like this new tone of command. "Yes," she said. "Presently. Won't you just have a look at my husband? He prefers me to leave him alone."

"I don't believe you can reach the sofa by yourself," he replied. "Are you often like this?"

She rose, but, to her annoyance, she leant heavily on his proffered arm. "I'm all right," she gasped. "It's only, when I'm quite worn out, like to-night, after a journey, that this pain

comes, and I feel a puppet with the strings cut. To-morrow I shall be rested and quite able to nurse——”

“You must have a trained sister,” he interrupted. She looked at him with suddenly comic pathos. “And the best local doctor,” he continued, quite pitiless.

“My mother advises not. My—my mother is gone!” she said.

He took an impatient turn or two in the little room, reflecting, seeking courage to make up his mind.

“Yes, you must have authoritative advice,” he said at last. “And, till you have found a competent person, if you will allow me, I will look after Mr. Lomas—do the necessary nursing——”

“I cannot allow you—your holiday——”

“Did I say ‘allow’?—that’s nonsense: you have no choice. And perhaps, some day, if I’m very cheeky, you’ll let me prescribe for you.”

“If you cure my husband, I will.”

He was silent. In the little room, with the darkness outside, they were both very silent and sad.

“I will go and see whether I can make him more comfortable for the night,” said Jack. “He is wonderfully patient.” To himself he said: “By Jove, it’s my nearest duty, as far as I can see: never mind what comes next.”

Lucia, left alone, drew little “Pascal” towards her: “You are my medicine,” she said. She read, on a well-worn page: “The stoics say: retreat into your inner selves, it is there you will find rest: but that isn’t true. The others say: Come out of yourselves: seek happiness in diversion: but that isn’t true. Sickness comes: happiness is neither outside us nor in us: it is with God, outside us and in.” She laid the book down beside Busk’s letter and tried to think out how true that must be. But every sharp breath of her husband’s went through her own heart like a stab. “Susan’s husband must paint the barn,” she said aloud. “He certainly doesn’t paint well.”

CHAPTER XXIII

SO Jack Russett stayed on till to-morrow, day by day. In the evening, at Monte Carlo, he would get restless for a last look at his invalid.

"How is he?"

"Much as usual," said Lucia.

Jack knew better. "I am going to have a bed in his room," he said, quite suddenly, one morning. "You can sleep across the passage."

She expostulated, but he smilingly bade her do exactly as her doctor told.

Madame Burlubaux fell in love with him immediately, utterly, and forever. But he hung in the long gallery of her beloveds, comfortably, beside Gen. le Docteur B. of the Académie de Marseilles and a young Abbé of the parish and also the great Doctor Globowsky. He suggested a remedy, well-known, for her asthma "that had tortured her since she was a babe unborn," and the capricious malady happened to respond. After that she was seen to kiss his hat in the passage. She vainly endeavored to arouse enthusiasm in her daughter's breast. Euphrosyne scornfully eyed the hat, an unromantic one, from Scott's.

"For me, that I bestow my affection," she said, "it first must be demanded of me, with smiles." There was a fascinating little Italian grocer without a hat, whose violet eyes beamed up at Mademoiselle Burlubaux, on his rounds, and a cabman, not less beamy, with a sombrero, and a patrolling policeman, with a *képi*—friends all, unrepresented, but present, when Mademoiselle, having temporarily settled her head-dress, appeared at her window, the event of her empty day.

Jack Russett, who *had* been presented, beamed each time that he met Mademoiselle Euphrosyne on the stairs. But his was the sort of kindly beam that doesn't count. "A doctor!" said "*la petite Microbe*" with uplifted nose, "that fusses round a sick man all day!"

And all night. The Riviera physician, whom Russett, gently insistent, had picked up first, an American, overworked, overprosperous, honestly convinced he was making his big fortune honestly—this medical man (Hankey) honestly declined to come again.

"I can do nothing you cannot do," he said to Jack on the boulevard. "Why take Mr. Lomas's money? He has come here too late. Four months ago Mentone would have cured him."

But the Pole, the pale, flabby Pole, out at elbows and bright of eyes, Madame Burlubaux's particular protégé, whom she had worried into the sick-room, the Pole said he couldn't for the life of him comprehend what all the long faces were so long for. He took Russett aside and asked him, with some irritation, whether he was actually unaware that, as science stands at present, tuberculosis, unlike phthisis, is considered curable? Jack, with moderation, replied that he had heard as much.

"Have you not then," exclaimed Globowsky, "diagnosed catarrh of the lungs—the first stage?"—without awaiting a reply he remarked that dosimetry would most certainly cure catarrh of the lungs, the first stage. He was a dosimetrist. He informed Lucia that this system would restore her husband to reasonable vigor in May. "I can then," he said, "either treat him by letter, or, better still, you can accompany me to Warschau."

Jack, as he sauntered by the blue curve of the Mediterranean, deliberated with himself: "Is it because I am a fool, or because I am a gentleman, that I have not yet thrown Globowsky downstairs?"

Dr. Russett, judging generally, would have decided that Jack was a bit of both. But Dr. Russett himself was nothing of either. And in no case could the great man consider any one connected with him an independent creature, allowed to act during two con-

secutive days for itself. So a telegram flashed almost immediately into the anxious monotony of nursing, with a demand for a reply to the Beechlands proposition and a not too remote departure from Monte Carlo. "The boy's fool enough to play at the tables," said Nathanael to Mrs. Nat, quite unreasonably. "And gentleman enough," replied Isabella with spirit, "to make a mess of that Beechlands offer." The great doctor looked up from his silver pots. "The offer is an advantageous one," he said threateningly. "Women don't understand about mines. What—ha!—do women understand about?" When the great doctor assumed that voice, Mrs. Nat began to study her rings.

Jack, definitely established at "Les Charmilles" (Madame Burlubaux's dingy *pension*), awaited during the next day or two an opportunity of speaking to Mr. Lomas, but he soon saw that explanations of any kind must be out of the question. He resolved to go straight to Lucia, tell her his name, ask her to obtain Henry's yes or no then and there, and fly home. It could all be done in ten minutes, the sooner, the better.

Lucia turned to welcome him. "Ah, docteur!" she said. She had caught that tone from the landlady, a small joke, such as they sought gladly, in their gloom.

But he didn't answer, as he had ventured to do yesterday (with atrocious accent): "Chère Madame!" he said brusquely, looking the other way: "I have heard of a first-rate nurse."

She started. "Ah!" she said, catching her breath.

"Mr. Lomas seems better to-day," he struggled on. "I wonder if Dr. Globowsky might possibly do him good? And you can always send for Dr. Hankey." He dug his fists into his trousers' pockets.

"You don't like Dr. Globowsky?" she said, much interested in some children at a window opposite.

"I am not a dosimetrist. I should sooner trust Dr. Hankey."

"Trust! Trust! We trusted Russett!"

He changed color.

"I shouldn't say things," she continued, "but what is the use, when one thinks them? This man who drove us forth from our

home, telling us we must never return to it, bidding us sell it—do you understand? can you tell me why he did it—why?” She held out her helpless hands to him: “Explain to me! I *want* to think fair!”

Jack felt he could not begin about Beechlands.

“Vouvray has had splendid successes,” he said lamely. “The Rajah of Rumdoolah——”

She put up her hand. “Spare me!” she said. “You forget you are speaking to the wife of the man in there.”

“At any rate,” he answered in petulant wretchedness, “Dr. Russett is not to blame for *that*.”

She hesitated: then she said quickly:

“Doubtless he got his commission for Henry as well.” She had wanted not to say it, but she could not bear this good hearted young fellow—a four days’ friend!—to remember her as altogether unreasonable and unfair.

She had certainly not reckoned on the effect of her few words. He turned white and then red, as if she had struck him across the face. Then he asked very quietly: “Who told you that—tale?” His restraint distressed her the more.

“Dr. Rook told me,” she hastened to reply, “and my husband said that from a business point of view it was right enough.”

“The medical profession isn’t a business,” he replied. “If it were we should—we should deal in human lives.” She shuddered at the words: they struck her very differently from him.

“I know you’re not like the others,” she said gently.

“But I am. You forget all along that I also advised you to go to Peysonnax.”

“I don’t forget. Why did you?” She turned away from the children: she looked at him, straight.

“Because I honestly believed it was for the best—strange reason, eh?—for a doctor. Because Dr. Russett said so, the greatest physician I have ever known. I have loved and revered Dr. Russett all my life. Day and night I have seen him working for others. He is my father!”

THE NEW RELIGION

For a moment she didn't understand, wondering at the poetic imagery of the pupil's phrase.

"My own father. I hadn't the heart to tell you, when I saw how much you disliked him. And I didn't want to add to your bothers, when the first thing, after all, was to help Mr. Lomas to get here."

"Your name is Russett?" she said, searching.

"I am sorry—and proud—to say it is. Mr. Lomas is perfectly aware of the fact. I suppose you never asked him: I hoped you would."

"I have hardly spoken to him these two days. I called you 'the doctor.' I didn't mind,"—she colored—"remembering you afterwards—like that——"

"As nobody."

"As one of the best friends I've ever had."

"And now you can remember me as the son of the man who has blasted your home."

She did not cry out in denial. She said softly: "And so you have got an excellent nurse for us and are going away?"

"Leaving you in the hands of Dr. Globowsky, whom you trust, whilst you have every reason to distrust me."

Again she did not deny.

"I want to cut off people's legs when they should remain on."

"Can't you stay?" she said.

"I have been telegraphed for."

"By—some one very important?" Her face was hidden against her hand.

"By my father."

"Oh, then, of course you must go." She paused and, when she spoke again, her voice had lost all its bitterness. "Somehow I had hoped—oh, I know it was quite stupid and selfish—only, people in my condition live by the day!—and it needn't perhaps, have been for long."

"Do you wish me to remain?" he answered. That was his answer, quickly as the next sentence sought to catch it up:

"I mean, of course, does Mr. Lomas really think I am of any real use?"

She hesitated, looking for her careful words. Then, with trembling lip: "You have done so much for us already," she said. "I know it would not be fair. Only I had hoped you were going to stay on for a week or two at Monte Carlo?" Suddenly she broke down completely, all her effort crumbling to the ground. "He is dying," she sobbed. "He doesn't know. He believes in this Polish doctor. I dread the man, I don't believe a word he says. He isn't honest. Oh, you'll say it's my prejudice against doctors. He isn't a doctor! He's a quack!"

"Hush! Oh don't—don't! If I only thought, I could be of service——!"

"You say that because you know—but one hopes against hope!"

He had been standing, gazing out, through the wide street opposite, to the shiny expanse of calm, blue sea. He steadied his voice to answer:

"I shall stay. Please don't say anything more. I wanted to stay."

"Only a day or two—a day or two, till my husband may speak again. And till you have found out about this Pole. I feel that I am terribly selfish——"

"How can you say that? I shall wire to my father, that he must let me remain in this lovely place, as I've come. After all, I'm entitled to my holiday. Isn't it a lovely place? I didn't think there ever could be one so lovely!" They had both spoken these last sentences rapidly, as people speak, when a long-restraint of emotion has at length given way. In his self-sacrifice she had read her husband's death-warrant. He, on his part, felt he had honestly acquired the privilege he had striven to surrender. He might stay.

"She must try to forgive me," he said to himself on his evening walk by the sea, "for being my father's son." He laughed scornfully. "My splendid father's duffer of a son!"

CHAPTER XXIV

NOT talk!" cried Globowsky. "Nonsense! Talk, and tell us how much better you feel!"

"I—feel—better," said Henry, in quick breaths. "So much better that, when spring comes, we shall go back to Vouvray." He smiled to Lucia. "Such a shame," he said, "to have interrupted your cure." Ah, what a grief that was to him, just as she was beginning to recover!

"Vouvray? Who is Vouvray?" interrupted Globowsky, frowning. "Avoid quacks. If madame would but put herself in my hands—" he bowed to Mrs. Lomas, his fat, yellow face all a-shine. "Most of your great doctors are quacks. Koch is a quack. So was Pasteur." He gazed down, complacently, at his glossy new coat.

"And who isn't a quack?" asked Lucia.

"Well—I," replied the Pole. "And others. All who follow a rational system. The allopaths have no system. The homœopaths have, but it's a wrong one. Believe in dosimetry."

"You have—certainly—done me a lot of good," said Henry.

"I will cure you, if you spend the summer with me in Warschau: Warschau is a beautiful city: there are delectable *café-chantants*. You are curable. You have catarrh in the first stage. Tubercular. I do not believe that you have brought up blood."

"But—!" exclaimed Lucia, horror-struck.

"Not arterial blood. Ah, madame, I have seen mistakes of the profession! Not that I would speak evil of my own colleagues—not I!"—the Pole spoke broken English, quite good of its kind, but good broken English is wearisome to reproduce—"Probably it was from the throat—glands. Or gums." He

inspected his new trousers carefully. "I am a specialist for the affections of the heart. The affectations of the heart, I would say—and chest. Next summer this invalid's lungs will be as good as mine." He wheezed.

"Yes, yes," Henry struggled to say. "Soon, dearest—soon."

Lucia clasped his hand behind Globowsky's back. It was a lean, bent back, but already it was getting broader, and rounder. The Pole, spectacled, very short-sighted, stumbled, as he did twice a day, over their threshold: they could hear him saying "Gums" down the narrow stair: they could hear Madame Burlubaux inviting him to warm his feet (*"J'ai ma bouillotte qui est toute brûlante, docteur!"*) and, especially, they could hear him cry up the staircase: "But, madame, I haven't a moment to spare!" as he slipped into the parlor for a couple of hours.

"He will cure me," said Henry, with the happy optimism of his malady. "What a mercy we happened on him—by the merest chance. With care I can live, he says, to be a hundred."

"Yes, dear."

"And in spring we will go back to Peysonnax."

"Yes, dear."

"Modern medicine is a marvelous thing, Lucia! What a wonderful age we live in! Twenty years ago my disease was quite incurable. Think of that!" His eyes glittered: his sunken cheeks shone red.

"Yes, dear. Now, you must not talk another word." She rose. "I hear Mr. Russett coming up." She kissed him, tried to say something more, could not, and passed out.

For a moment there flashed across that loyal, simple heart of his a novel pang, lest his young wife, irresponsible, should not yearn, quite as he did, for this "living on, with care, to be a hundred"—a long old age of cautious invalidism—she so lovely, so fresh, with all her bright life before her. "God forgive me!" he said, turning on his pillow, deeply ashamed. He could hear Jack's cheery voice in the adjoining "salon." Hour by hour he was hoping for strength to disappoint Jack about Beechlands, to tell him definitely but kindly: no.

"Do you think that Globowsky can do him positive harm?" demanded Lucia, anxiously, again.

"No, I don't," replied Jack. Undoubtedly the young man was impressed by the way in which this forlorn and charming creature had been compelled to close her arms—metaphorically—around his calm support. Already, in these few days, they were familiar confidants such as sickness alone can bring together. She trusted him.

"I don't see how his treatment could hurt," said Jack slowly. "Nor do good," he mentally added, in changeless fear lest she should read his thoughts. "You might consult some one else."

Would it be worth while?—she also was afraid lest he should guess that question and unwittingly answer it. Aloud she only said: "We couldn't do so and remain with Madame. She is infatuated about this Pole. And so, in fact, is Henry."

"Well, that is the chief thing, after all," said Jack heartily. "That, and the climate."

A spell of hot weather had followed on two days of cruel cold. The icy wind never drops, but the southern sun came piercing through all garments, and your skin. For a week or two people left off sneezing and coughing and overcoats, surprised by the grateful glow and pneumonia. Jack Russett, disillusioned in a day, complained to the chemist.

"Boiling sun and biting wind again," said Jack. "Your climate don't mix. It's like oil and water."

The chemist was an energetic little Swiss, driving a roaring trade, full of suppressed gout and consequent unsuppressed temper.

"The people who leave the Riviera alive may feel certain that climate can't kill," he snapped.

Jack stared at him. "But the doctors all over the world?" he stammered, "who forward their patients to the doctors here?"

"Business is business," replied the apothecary, making folds, in a little parcel, of geometric precision. "You're a young doctor, are you not? I advise you to start business here. Have you good correspondents at home?" He limped after Jack

to the big plate-glass door. "I allow five per cent. more on all bills," he said, "than any other man in my profession."

Jack walked out, full of tumbly new thoughts. He nearly knocked up against Dr. Hankey, just getting out of his victoria.

"How do you like my new greys?" demanded the physician, exuberant.

"Is it true that some doctors accept a commission on chemists' bills?" answered Russett.

"It's a damnable lie," replied the other, reddening.

"And what do you think of this place as a cure for chest complaints?" persisted Jack.

Dr. Hankey shrugged his shoulders. "*I can't tell them to stop away,*" he said, and hurried into the Grand Hotel.

Jack Russett was glad to drop down heavily upon the nearest bench. He (quite wrongly) knew the Pole to be a swindler, but he felt that the American was two-thirds an honest man. And he sat watching, with a doctor's eye, amid the babble around the music, for the pale-faced, the flushed, the heavy-footed, the all too bright. They passed him, constantly, many laughing gaily, others laughing—otherwise. A quiet little old maid, poorly clad, stood for a moment near him, alone, glancing right and left. Then she wandered meaninglessly on. He had never dreamed of anything of this kind: suddenly the world filled, before his fresh, young gaze, with all sorts of dim evils, vague crimes. Before him arose the vision of countless consulting rooms: the ruin, separation, yearning compressed in that one glib sentence: "You must winter in the South"—at that very moment a voice said, close beside him: "Winter in the South." A young man, by the look of him an English undergraduate, was telling a double-chinned matron his troubles: "So, you see, I came out here by myself."

Jack Russett shivered in the wind. He went across, to the still esplanade—where more wind was!—and, leaning his elbows on a parapet, gazed at the wide curve of the lovely city, in its terraces of palm trees and oranges; the countless giant hotels, pensions and villas the whole splendid, expensive machinery,

the medical "plant." And yonder, on the lonely hill the quiet graveyard, where there are no more sick! He dug his strong chin into the broad palms of his hands. He dug it down deeper. A girl laughed shrilly between him and the music—a laugh that died away in a cough.

He walked back deliberately to *Les Charmilles*. Hitherto he had always thought medicine meant healing.

"Why so gloomy, *mon beau monsieur*?" questioned the landlady, who liked to chatter with her Pole and to look at Jack. The greasy Globowsky detested the rival doctor, not only because the latter wore clean linen, but chiefly because of Madame Burlubaux's continuous gibe: "*Je n'ai plus mon asthme*." The Pole had long laid siege to the widow (who owned *Les Charmilles*), planning a dosimetric invalid home: she, in what she called her "feminine feebleness" had often dreaded an unwilling surrender, but now she had found a weapon of defence which she mercilessly used. When Globowsky, sitting opposite her, his feet warm (on a *bouillote*) and his heart warm (on a glass of "ponch"), when Globowsky grew tender, she would instantly reply with slow meaning, in a squeak or a growl:

"*Vous savez, je n'ai plus mon asthme*."

"I was curing it—had you but waited," he retorted at last.

She smiled, as an eagle might, if eagles smile: "How inconsiderate of Monsieur Rosette!"

They are married, these two. She still says such things. The untidy house is full of dosimetered patients. The gouty apothecary allows fifteen per cent. commission, but the metric doses are very small. Madame Globowsky refuses to "extortionise the invalids." Also, she talks all day about Koch's fallacies and wants Globowsky to eat *tartines* full of microbes in the presence of the Scientific Academy of Marseilles. He refuses with vehemence: so they quarrel: her kind temper is rapidly souring. When contrite, she brings her fat husband a *bouillotte*. "*Elle me chauffe les pieds*," he says grimly to Euphrosyne (who has accepted a coachman) "*et la tête*." He says it often: it is his solitary joke.

Euphrosyne has not exactly accepted her cab-driver. At least, he always maintains it was she who proposed to him. During many years they had exchanged daily smiles through her window, but, then, she might have said the same of the policeman, and the violet-eyed grocer's boy—and others. The match came about like this. When the blushing madame, once more and just newly a bride, flung both arms, as the easiest *dénouement*, round her greasy Pole, to greet her daughter's entrance, Euphrosyne, stopping dead in the doorway, gave utterance to a long-drawn, unmusical "*Hein!*" then turned and tore along the Boulevard. Chancing to meet her prowling cab-driver, she flung up *her* arms to him in an unreasoned appeal. He stopped his victoria, and, dusky-red, bold-eyed Italian that he was: "where to?" said he. She hesitated:

"*Menez-moi—à l'hôtel——?*"

"*Dans quelle église?*" says he, quick as a shot. So they were ultimately married, on the pun, without her mother's leave, but she had more than the requisite age. Afterwards, when he had openly joined the free-thinkers (for sake of a seat in the Town-Council) he loudly maintained that he had said "*de ville?*": he would beat her, if she contradicted him. 'Twas a lie, none the less.

All that's in the future. Said Madame Burlubaux to Jack Russett: "Why so gloomy, *mon beau monsieur?*"

"Because people are ill whom I want to be well, madame."

"Madame L'homasse, I think she is better," replied madame.

"I was thinking of monsieur," says Jack, reddening.

"Tra-la-la—and why not? Ah, monsieur, he is very ill. But his doctor says he may go for a drive."

"For a drive?" Jack stood still, aghast.

"Hush—madame will hear you!—she listens for your coming. Why not a drive? You have driven with madame all these days—it has given the desire to monsieur!"

"But the cold——"

"Ah, the wind of Mentone, it does not kill—and the sun of Mentone, it makes to live."

"I admit, I don't understand about the confounded climate," muttered Jack, on the stairs.

The landlady crept up behind him. "The consumptives here, they live as if they were well," she whispered. "That is the great difference between here and their home." Jack pondered these words on his way up.

It was true that he had taken a couple of the beautiful drives with Lucia—it had been impossible to ignore Henry's insistence. Euphrosyne willingly accompanied them, being appreciative of the coachman's (another coachman's) brown curls: moreover, she understood not a word of any language but her own. "The little goose doesn't trouble *me*," said Jack. "Now and then I say 'Boh!' to her and nod at the landscape. And she says: '*Oui, très beau*,' and she nods at the landscape, too." Jack said: "Wee, tray boh," but what's the use of harping on that? He and Lucia talked a lot about the landscape: it freshened them up amazingly to realize how marvelous its manifold glories were.

Madame Burlubaux, meanwhile, easily content, and with a real liking for laughter, sat by Henry's bedside declaiming, far from badly, the most farcical farces of Labiche. Henry had always had a cultured business man's taste for lighter French literature. Madame Burlubaux, slipshod, spread-eagle, her green dress full of stains, the tears on her long cheeks, rolled out the queer nonsense of "*Une Fille Bien Gardée*"—she kicked up her thin legs in an ecstasy: a slipper dropped unnoticed: she read on. Henry, lying back in his pillows, gaunt, laughed. Terrified, she stopped dead, and, with laughter, remonstrated. "Has he not '*esprit*' this Labiche? But, now attend to me, you *may not*! Laugh inwardly alone, or at once I go away. Solemnly I promised Monsieur Rosette. But my husband said laughter was ever the best medicine. 'If the dead could but laugh, they would revive,' he used to say. Can we deny it? Laugh inwardly, then: I command you! Have you got your *bouillotte*?"

"Tell me a little of Monsieur Burlubaux," said Henry, exhausted.

"Le Docteur Burlubaux," she corrected him. "Ah, he was a great man, a lover of science in these money-loving days. 'See!' he said, before the whole Academy of Sciences, and stood munching his microbes. Ah, it was divine. Little know we, we women—what we marry, great or small: we ever find out afterwards. I was fortunate. I married Burlubaux because he was a doctor. Being a doctor's daughter, I felt I could not go outside the profession. It would have hurt too much the feelings of my poor father, who died before I was born."

"Eh?" said Henry.

"Dying, he had said: 'If it be a boy, let it be a doctor!' The least I could do, in filial piety, was to become a doctor's wife. Le Docteur Burlubaux was plain, but good. And a second demand from a doctor, it was doubtful."

"Quite so," whispered Henry.

She bridled at this. "It may happen yet," she said, picking up the slipper, by a set of gymnastic exercises impossible to any one with less telescopic length of limb. "Seven suitors have made advances to me—two *bankers*—to one and all I have replied: 'Are you a doctor?' One of them answered: 'I am.'"

Henry nodded vehement interest.

"He was a doctor of chemistry," continued madame with loftiest scorn. "He lived in smells!" She crossed her legs—the effect was that of a wind-mill, and the other, far away slipper fell off. "One of the bankers offered to start then and there for Montpellier and enter himself as a student. It would have been *vain* (he was forty-seven), but that"—she looked up dreamily, to the copper curls in the hanging paraffin lamp—"was love."

She must see the cobwebs now, thought Henry. He said: "*C'est ça.*"

"Euphrosyne has not any feeling. She, her father's *Microbe d'Amour*, she says she will not consider profession, but hair—hair, Monsieur L'homasse! Imagine the feelings of Madame Burlubaux! To you I unburthen myself: you are a man with a heart. Hair! One thing, at least, have I obtained from her, by the gift of my amethyst necklace off my neck——" She

paused, and sighed deeply. Henry sighed, too. "She has promised," said Madame Burlubaux in a great burst of confidence, "not to marry a 'pothecary.'"

"I sympathize," said Henry. Then he had a bad fit of coughing, and she saw him through it with neat-handed care. For she was slovenly in everything but nursing, suddenly transformed at the bedside by the professional instinct of the thing.

"Did she marry a *pharmacien*, le Docteur Burlubaux, he would return from his gravel *Et puis, moi, vous savez, ça ne ferait pas mon affaire!*" She slapped up the pillow: she pulled down the blind. "*Eh, mais pas du tout! Pas du tout,*" she repeated. "Le Docteur Burlubaux, he had studied all science. His head was like the ocean, and what gave he to his patients? Bread pills and colored water! 'That,' he said, 'is the end of our learning.' Ah, but he was a wonderful doctor for those who are not ill." She put her bony hand quite lightly on Henry's ice-bag. "And of those who consult physicians, these are nine-tenths," she said. Then she sat down with a jerk that cracked her chair. "Not another word!" she expostulated. "See nothing! Know nothing! Snooze awake! Like my daughter Euphrosyne when she drives in scenery the fairest on earth!"

It was true that Euphrosyne had no eye for scenery—she would not have recognized Gorbio or Roquebrune—no eye for anything but brown curls, a slice of cream cheek and the tip of a moustache.

It was Madame Burlubaux who, anxious to promote universal cheeriness, convinced Globowsky that "*le pauvre chéri*" must drive out. All animate things in Madame Burlubaux's small world, and many inanimate, were "*le pauvre chéri*." The former husband, the future one, most dogs, any cripple, an assassinated emperor, the coffee-pot, when it cracked. She said "*le pauvre chéri*" stood in need of fresh air, and Henry vehemently agreed.

"It is dreadfully dull for him," said Lucia, back from her own drive, drawing off her gloves. "I feel so selfish coming home to tell him how beautiful it was. He has traveled so little. What a chance to see the most beautiful country in the world!"

"I suppose it is the loveliest country in the world," responded

Jack. He stood twirling his hat. Had nervousness been in his line, he would have felt he was nervous.

"Of my world," corrected Lucia, laughing, from her couch.

"Don't you think you had better take some other opinions first?" he said in a strange voice.

"You don't approve of this drive?" she cried, alarmed.

"At least, if I were you, I should make sure——"

"Sure!" she laughed again, but not blithely, bitterly.

Then, fearing to seem ungracious: "Henry trusts Globowsky more than any doctor," she said. "And I——"

"Trust none," said Jack.

"It is hardly fair in you to say that to me, Dr Russett." She had not yet spoken his name since he had told it her.

He looked quickly away. "I beg your pardon," he said. "It is because I care so much." And then they were silent.

"Won't you take your tea?"

"Thanks." But he did not stir. "I can't help feeling as if I had a certain responsibility," he continued haltingly. "I know I'm not *the* doctor in charge of the case, but I can't help being a sort of doctor all the same, you see. I know, a great doctor has often said to me—oh, look here, you don't want me to be ashamed of my own father: my father always says, the next best thing to having a genius for your doctor is to have a fool whom you believe in. So——" he broke off, came forward and, without looking at her, drank down his tea in a gulp. "It sounds selfish. Heaven knows I don't intend it so. Did I say: Responsibility? Oh, that's not the right word, but, you see, I can't help caring—now." Still she was silent, very busy with her tea-things, not looking at him either: the tea-things clinked.

"You think it matters still," she said at last, trembling, in a whisper, every word an effort. There was hope in her question, that was barely a question, barely a hope.

The bright air outside suddenly thickened before his gaze. He saw the houses opposite, in the distance, go sinking away, as it were, into the sea. He steadied himself, till they all came right again.

"You are cruel not to answer me at once," she said faintly. "I asked you a question as a doctor whom I can trust." He wrenched himself round from the window: his face was drawn and white: she sat forward, her thin hands clenched, her big eyes staring. "Answer me! You know well enough what I mean! Answer!"

He flung what was left of his medical reputation, her future respect even for his veracity, anything, everything to the winds in his passionate resolve to relieve her.

"Of course he may recover," he said.

She broke into feeble weeping.

"He has always been so good to me," she said simply. "I love him so."

"I know you do. He deserves it."

"I'm not very strong," she said, drying her eyes. "You mustn't mind. I felt sure you thought he had only a few days to live."

"Globowsky is an impostor! a humbug! a quack!" he cried, swept along by his excitement. "You know as well as I what a rogue he is—Globowsky! Why do we always lie to each other—all of us, I mean—in this world where it's so difficult anyhow to find out the truth?"

"Save him! Save him!" she exclaimed.

He stood before her, aghast.

"I thought," she cried, "I had begun to think—oh, I can't say it! Yes, why not? I"—she struggled on—"I thought, why not let him have his own way, have this great pleasure, if—as——"

"Hush!" he said gently. "You will hurt yourself. We will all do all we can for him."

"No," she replied with a sudden change and decision. "Globowsky must not touch him now. Henry will do what I ask. You will cure him."

"I can only do my best," answered Russett, striving to speak calmly. "But now I must insist on being your doctor and ordering you to lie down for an hour. I saw Mrs. Blandrey at Monte

Carlo last night. She was very anxious about you, and so sorry she dared not come herself. She told me that *I* was to take care of you."

"We cannot allow him to have this drive," insisted Lucia, exhausted, white and worn.

"No. He mustn't go out as yet." Jack placed a hortatory hand on the knob of the door which led to Lucia's bedroom.

"I'm afraid," she said without moving from her couch, "I must ask you to ring for Madame Burlubaux." Suddenly he realized a tithe of the hidden difficulties of her position.

"I wish I could be of more assistance," he said.

"I'm afraid, if we stay longer, we shall have to get a good maid for me. I had reckoned on my mother's. And it has all seemed so horribly temporary—these few days. But now"—she smiled happily. "You have filled me with new hope! We must make definite arrangements. The whole world looks different!" She held out her hand to him, to take leave. He lifted her, almost involuntarily, to her feet and, being a doctor, half carried her, on his strong arm, through the doorway. "Thanks," she breathed. "I can manage—now."

He went back to his own hotel, where he had made a number of friends, and played bridge till dinner. He played badly. "You are making a mess of it, my boy," remarked his partner, a purple old Indian.

"It's quite time, Colonel," said Jack. "It's so awfully easy to make a mess of things." He was not thinking of cards as he played, but of a far more comprehensive game. Hitherto he had found it so easy: straight along a bright, smooth course—right into a maze.

CHAPTER XXV

"**M**ONSIEUR L'HOMASSE asks to speak to you, Docteur," said Madame Burlubaux.

Russett jumped up. "I am coming at once. I was coming anyhow." He hastened across the little lobby.

The pension-bedroom was squalid with just the sort of squalor incidental to a second-rate boarding-house where the cheerful landlady does not see dust. But the sun was on this side, the Riviera sun, flooding, gilding the whole atmosphere, effacing all shabbiness, imperceptibly, inevitably gladdening every heart. Henry lay high up against his pillows, with bright eyes gazing at the picture opposite—an insipid engraving of a calf-eyed swain behind a stile and a simpering maid before it, marked "Jeunesse." Once, once only had he uttered a complaint to the landlady in a sudden impatient outbreak: "Take that stupid thing away!" Madame Burlubaux had forgotten, and Henry had not asked again.

He now turned his weary eyes away from the picture—he detested it, for its suggestion, and it fascinated him. "Close the door," he said.

"Don't talk more than you can help. You talked too much yesterday to Dr. Globowsky."

A slight frown flitted over Henry's forehead. This young fellow wasn't fair to the clever Pole—professional rivalry! And the Pole judged right: a man must have change of atmosphere, of surroundings—more invalids were killed by depression than by exertion. The Pole understood his case:—this Kefyr (it happened to be a Kefyr-period) was certainly doing him good. Henry's fingers ran over the coverlet.

"I *must* talk," he said, with his labored breath, "a little. To you."

Jack Russett sat down by the bedside. "Say it in as few words as you can; that's all," he answered. "Whisper. Don't hurry. I've heaps of time."

"I have not," replied the sick man. He said nothing more for thirty seconds, and the long silence, in the brilliant sunlight, was terrible to bear. At last he broke out.

"I am dying," he said. He lay there, with the small, red spots on his pale cheeks, gasping out every word in longdrawn, quick gasps, a middle-aged man in pajamas, neat with the painful neatness of the carefully tended sick.

"You mustn't say such a thing," exclaimed Jack, horrified. "Why, you told the Pole only yesterday how much good he was doing you. You were making plans for the summer."

The sick man nodded.

"You're feeling down after your bad night. You'll feel better to-morrow——"

"No," said the sick man, "it isn't that. It would be a shame not to cheer Globowsky up a bit, when he's taking all that trouble! And the Keyfr is doing me a lot of good, and of course one always feels one *might* get better, but"—he shook his head, unable to say more for several minutes, coughing. "I shan't——"

"You must put these thoughts away from you," pleaded Jack warmly. "It isn't fair to Mrs. Lomas."

A swift change swept over Henry's face: it all went out in pieces for one brief moment: then he steadied it and bravely: "It is of her," he said, "that I want to speak. Would you lift me up a bit?" He settled himself high up against the pile of pillows, clinging, gasping for dear life: "Let me!" he whistled, brushing aside the other's appeal. "I *must*. My wife will be alone. Hear! Her mother no good. No near relations. Help her! Don't leave till I'm buried. Bury me here." He sank again and lay gazing at the fatuous youth, the simpering maiden—"Jeunesse." His glance moved to the big young fellow at his bedside and rested there.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that!" Jack burst out, "when

you know Globowsky says you'll be well in the spring!" He poured it all forth in a rush, but his voice just faltered on the "well," and his companion smiled the most pitiful of all human smiles.

"Well?" said Henry: then he added wistfully: "Of course I might get better, but——" he broke off: long afterwards he whispered, "I shall not. Promise!"

"Most certainly I promise to do all I can for you and Mrs. Lomas."

Henry held out his hand: Jack clasped it sturdily. The sick man lay with the sunbeams pouring across him: Jack rose to pull down the blind.

"Higher!" said Henry impetuously. "Let it in!" and thus Russett had to give the dosimetric medicine in the dosimetric way. This duty having been conscientiously performed, the patient beckoned him closer. "I'm not infectious, am I, Russett?" asked Henry, anxiously, "speaking low down like this?"

"No—no—no—not for a doctor! Still, you mustn't let Mrs. Lomas——"

"Move back——!" cried Henry with sudden force. "I can make myself heard. I want you to promise one thing more. And not tell my wife."

"I promise," said the other quickly, his eyes in the sick man's burning eyes.

"When a man's time's come, it has come, Russett. You know as well as I that mine has. I'm not readier than most men. I didn't dream of this ten days ago—but I'm not—afraid to say I'm not—as ready as I should be." Jack grasped his hand in silence.

"Shall I shake up your pillows?" said Jack.

"Thanks. Now, I want you to take my wife a longish excursion this afternoon, whilst I go for a short drive with Globowsky. And not tell her."

"But you must not go for drives."

"You have promised. I have set my heart on it. Well, look here, just one chance: Will you—cure me—if I don't?"

Jack Russett stood trying to steady himself, beside the husband, as he had stood beside the wife.

"You've answered," said Lomas sadly. "I'm going. Be out from two to four."

"You surely are not thinking——"

"Half an hour at three. I haven't pleased people so much in my life, whatever Lucia may say. I've always been a selfish bachelor."

"I most earnestly advise you to please him in some other way."

"You have promised." Henry's voice, long a hoarse whisper, grew cold as well as tired. "And I want, just once, to see—all the beauty. God's glorious world—having come all this way—before I go." He closed his eyes, but opened them almost immediately to the sunlight. There was no view from his window, only sunlight and radiant blue sky.

"I want—I want," he murmured, "all the beauty—wondrous—once—before I go." He lay whispering these words to himself, his lips barely moving. "The wondrous beauty—before I go."

Jack Russett moved deliberately away from the bedside. He took a book off the table and settled down with it. It was a volume of Labiche, not well within his compass at any time. But he bravely tackled "Un Chapeau de Paille d'Italie," while the dying man's eyes wandered from the brilliant window to the picture of "Jeunesse," to the healthy, well-groomed figure intent upon the funny book. Presently the complications around the fatal hat became so irresistibly ludicrous that Jack felt he was going to smile. He closed the book at once and came forward. "Not another word!" he said in response to Lomas's eager look. "If you *must* let me know something, write it down." Henry wrote: "We will talk of it to-morrow." He meant the old doctor's offer for Beechlands, convinced that young Russett, whose good faith was beyond suspicion, would be glad to hear the facts properly explained. "I can't now. I'm too tired." And, indeed, he was half-dead, with his unremitting fever, but, what was the use, Russett felt, of crushing down his anxiety into distressful silence when in another moment the all-powerful Globowsky would enter and recommend a chat with Madame Burlubaux?

CHAPTER XXVI

"**M**ADAME will go to La Mortola!" cried Madame Burlubaux, appealing to everybody. They were all in the salon, talking together. "It is wonderful, marvelous!"

"*Ca, c'est des plantes: y a rien à voir,*" objected the scornful Euphrosyne.

"To-day is the day," put in Globowsky.

"Yes, madame, yes; I will go," said the harassed Lucia. "We may as well go this afternoon. My husband so enjoys your reading."

Jack had pinned the Pole against the wall. "His temperature was a hundred and one this morning," he said.

"It was a hundred and two last night!" cried Globowsky triumphantly. "The open air will bring it down to a hundred. Always it strikes me how you English are at the back! Nakedness by the sea-coast in the Arctics, it is the great novel treatment for disease of the lungs!"

Jack turned his back on the Pole and walked into Henry's room. "Promise me for your wife's sake, not to stir," he said. Henry nodded. "It's a promise?"

"Yes," said Henry vexed.

"*La voiture!*" called Madame Burlubaux. Jack went out, feeling he had done an ungentlemanly thing.

On the landing stood Globowsky, defiant. "Mr. Lomas has promised me not to go out to-day," said Jack with too marked a note of triumph.

The Pole turned green. "Who is his doctor?" asked Globowsky. The two men measured each other.

"I don't think he's got a doctor," said Jack. Five minutes

later the Pole, with clenched teeth and heaving chest, administered to his semi-conscious patient a grey powder in a glass "to stop your coughing:" ten minutes later the patient was asleep.

"*Tiens, un vieux!*" exclaimed Euphrosyne, at sight of a strange driver: the idea rendered her, for one moment, malignant. "*La Mortola?—j'ai y mener les morts,*" she said, as Russett gave his arm to Lucia. Then she told Jack, who was dark, that she liked fair men. He didn't mind.

But he minded finding La Mortola all crush and climb. The place is a sort of botanical collection massed on a steep, and chokeful, on a show-day, of tourists. "Let's go back," he said. But Lucia, like most delicate women, and never a delicate man, enjoyed, in a desperate sort of way, doing more than she could. She sat by the gateway and took a bird's-eye view of the palm-crowded terraces.

"It's more like a store-room than a dinner-table," she said, disappointed.

"I'm so sorry we came," he said, much distressed. Euphrosyne had wandered off to inspect whatsoever she might find of interest, certainly not "dumb plants." Lucia leant against the old stone parapet, with its covering of climbing geranium. The Italian hills sank away from the height where she sat, in low curves, endless miles and miles along the sapphire sea. Through the gardens a number of tourists were wandering, more or less aimlessly, in their ignorance of species, climbing past many a floral marvel, with shrill protest, from terrace to terrace. "*Na, ich danke,*" said a stout German lady, just beneath Lucia's seat, with fierce decision and scant breath. "*Ich geh' nicht weiter. Ich bin ja keine Botanica!*" People are not accustomed to exert themselves on the Riviera.

"I am now able to tell Madame Burlubaux I have seen it," said Lucia soothingly, "and the English clergyman, and the washerwoman and Dr. Globowsky. It evidently was a thing to do. Curious how people insist on your amusing yourself their way."

"You don't care for gardens?"

"I love gardens, but I don't like all the outlandish things, heaped up with Latin labels. It makes one feel so—so quiet among strangers. I *do* know dozens of flowers by their own names." He smiled. "Don't laugh at me: you know quite well what I mean. Our own dear flowers with their own dear names, at home." She turned away from the curious scene beneath her. "Let us go!" she said, her eyes grown suddenly hard. "I never want to see a garden again."

"I must try to find Euphrosyne," he said, looking, helplessly, right and left.

But already she had turned back, ashamed. "Don't trouble!" she said. "I was foolish. Isn't it wonderful to think we are actually in Italy? I never was in Italy. The mere word is a poem!" She shivered as she spoke, for an icy wind had sprung up, such as we all know arises in the fairest Riviera sunshine. It is said that those near enough can occasionally hear the mercury flop.

He drew her cloak from his arm—he liked to carry her cloak, in an atmosphere of professional care and personal protection—and he put it about her shoulders, with attentive readjustment of the folds. It was a handsome cloak, such as Mrs. Blandrey would have approved of: mentally he compared Lucia's ever suitable raiment with Mrs. Nat's.

"How considerate you are," she said simply. "One would think you had been ill yourself."

"I never had a pain in my life that I didn't honestly earn." He laughed brightly, looking at his watch. Clouds had obscured the sun: the fierce wind seemed laden with the cold of the snowy hill-tops. But for his decisive intervention Henry would now be starting on his little drive to the headland of St. Martin.

The bell of a church rang up from a hamlet by Ventimiglia.

"What is that?" asked Lucia, starting.

"Three o'clock."

"Oh, only the hour!"

But the bell continued ringing beyond the slow stroke of three.

"No, it isn't," said Lucia. She listened. "At home we should say it was tolling."

"No, no: it's not tolling."

"Why not?" She looked up at him, surprised. "But it is tolling. Did you think I thought people didn't die here?"

"People oughtn't to die anywhere," he exclaimed.

"I don't believe they do. It all depends what you mean by death. Still, they separate—they have to go: that is bad enough. How serious we are getting! But I understand your feeling. It does look as if, in this glorious, smiling country there ought to be no death."

"I wish that beastly bell would stop!" he cried.

"I like it. I wonder whom it is tolling for. Some poor old Italian weary with trouble beneath the cloudless sun? Which isn't cloudless." She pointed. "Or a young girl just beginning—but one might go on for ever: you will think me inane."

"What a word!"

She laughed. "I'm afraid my husband would. He teases me because I imagine things. But isn't it tempting to gaze down at that little picturesque village—so outlandish, so worlds away from us!—and to speculate on its teeming joys and sorrows of the moment—and whom that bell is tolling for!"

"Doesn't Mr. Lomas care for romance?"

"Hardly. At any rate, he likes a tragedy to have really occurred." She laughed again, more brightly than ever. "I didn't put that nicely. What I mean is: he doesn't care for make-believe horrors."

"Indeed, there are real tragedies enough, and to spare," said Russett with half-closed lips.

"How oddly you say that! But I suppose a doctor does see terrible things. Half the tragedies of the world are connected with death and sickness. I used to meet with plenty in our village. And now—how clear that bell sounds. But I think the wind is cold."

"Yes: come away to the carriage. It has struck me that

Euphrosyne will probably be there, examining the various—horses.”

“Does she care for horses? I had not noticed,” replied Lucia innocently. “That’s a good thing to know: we shall have a subject in common.”

“Quite so,” said Jack hopelessly, resigned, once for all, to his harvest of lies.

Lucia had risen: she paused for one last view of the radiant panorama, as the sun again suddenly overspread without mixing, the chilly air. “I’m glad it’s *so* different,” she said thoughtfully. “One doesn’t compare.” And as they wandered away to the lessening clang of the campanile, she quoted softly: “‘Better than a prayer bell for a saint in dying!’”

“That’s fine,” said Jack, as she finished the stanza. “Whose is it?”

“Christina Rossetti’s. I suppose my first sight of Italy recalled her to my mind.”

“I’m afraid I can only manage some kinds of poetry—by myself. Byron and Scott—and Shakespeare.”

“Shakespeare will do,” she said, with a twinkle in her eyes. “Now, Henry says Shakespeare bores him, outside His Majesty’s Theater. But”—she spoke in sudden alarm lest she might seem to depreciate her husband to this stranger, “you mustn’t fancy he doesn’t know what’s good. He has exquisite taste. I wish you had seen Beechlands!” She broke off. “And he thoroughly enjoys a good French play.”

“I think he’s most awfully clever,” replied Jack. “I wish I could read French like that.”

“There is Euphrosyne, just as you thought. I wanted to tell you,” she continued hurriedly, “how happy you have made me by what you said last night. You have put new life into me. I don’t think I could have come to La Mortola before.”

He looked at her, as she crept along, frail, exhausted, with every claim for most delicate handling to the medical eye, and he miserably mumbled a few words about Lomas’s critical condition which he felt cravenly relieved to see she didn’t catch. For Euphrosyne

was already upon them, and Lucia was kindly inquiring: "Have *you* ever read, mademoiselle, the works of the poet Labiche?"

"No, indeed, madame," replied Euphrosyne, vastly insulted.

Lucia, turning scarlet, remembered suddenly that "French is French," and they drove some distance in awkward silence. But she said to herself: "If Henry enjoys that sort of books, he must be feeling miles away from danger," and she, refreshing, comforted herself with the thought.

The return road was a medley of cabs, carriages and motor-cars. The whole evening heaven rose high, one great globe of soft sunshine: the whole evening sea spread wide, one far glitter of light. Behind Mentone the mountains stood resplendent, a grey radiance of iron and silver: the oranges and lemons shone, a vast illumination, all through the broad masses of dull green and dust. The Cougainvillia drooped, a purple and scarlet blaze, under the million yellow fluffs of the mimosa, along the long terraces of the long-drawn road. They drove on, in a crowded procession, much clatter, clang and tooting; and prospect after prospect unwound itself in ever-varying harmony of effect.

"It is beautiful beyond the wildest dream of beauty!" said Lucia. "How I wish my poor husband could see it!"

"It would be perfect but for the dust," replied Russett—the usual Riviera remark.

"Well, of course the dust is beyond all belief," she assented, cheerfully putting her handkerchief to her lips.

As they descended, the haze thickened around them. It was like driving in a fog. A fog that filtered through every orifice. Lucia coughed.

"Is there no dust in your country?" demanded Euphrosyne, still offended, watching the handkerchief with evil eye.

"Not like this. Well, we all must pay for our pleasures! Why, the drivers can hardly see their way!"

Even as she spoke, another carriage, coming from the esplanade, crossed theirs, nearly dashing into it, at the turn of the boulevard. Their man had to draw up sharply, with the usual torrents of abuse on both sides. The other driver whipped up his horses

with even fiercer cuts than usual. The animals leaped, shrinking, away.

"Why?" exclaimed Lucia, bewildered. "What? Why, stop! That was Henry! Mr. Russett!"

"It was," said Jack.

"Henry out with Madame Burlubaux and Globowsky! In this weather? What has happened?" She was trembling all over. "What does it mean?"

"He wanted to have a short drive. You know the doctor wished it. Mr. Lomas was as anxious as he."

"Did you know?"

He could not say that Lomas had broken a solemn promise.

"I did not think they would go," he said.

"You thought it *possible*, and we left him!"

She turned to the houses, uttering not a word more, unable to utter one, as the carriage swiftly traversed the short distance that remained. The other driver had taken a directer cut. His lean horses were already creeping away from the door.

Lucia, with barely a farewell to Jack, crossed the threshold of her husband's bedroom. As she did so, and beheld him lying there, she conquered herself in a mighty effort, and, smiling, she said to him: "I hope you enjoyed your drive." She said it very quietly, putting Madame Burlubaux aside, and beginning to busy herself as best she could with the invalid.

He seemed hardly to comprehend, with a mist behind his gaze.

"Beautiful," he murmured.

"Dearest, I am so glad you have seen it."

"Is that you, Lucia? I am so glad we came here."

That night in the silence of the sleeping house Jack Russett came to Lucia's door. When he called her, she knew at once what awaited her. A convent bell was clanking: she had lain listening to it, as she often did, in its nightly disturbance of the disturbed sleep of the sick. It had reminded her of the Italian campanile, and the ringing for the dead.

"I'm afraid you must come. I'm afraid he is very ill."

In a moment she stood before the bed, had sunk down beside

it, not a moment too soon. He lay quiet, white, among the white bed-clothes, and the pillow, and the sheet about his mouth was one great scarlet stain. She was close to him with vague movements of help, with soft words of encouragement, and endearment. When he saw her thus near him, an expression came over him of yearning fulfilled. She knew she could do nothing worth doing. They were alone together: that was all.

"Dearest," she whispered. "Oh, dearest! My dearest!"

He half motioned her away from him, yet at the same time he sought to clasp her hand, but his fingers fell away around it. And his eyes, as their light sank back, far back—far away—away from her, were full of long love and of lingering farewell.

CHAPTER XXVII

“ACCIDENTS will happen in the best regulated families,” said Madame Burlubaux. She sat wiping her eyes by her wood fire. On her lap lay Labiche’s “Maman Sabouleux.” Globowsky stood opposite.

“You needn’t bite your nails,” remarked Euphrosyne with acerbity to the Pole.

“Peace, *ma fille*, get *ce pauvre docteur a bouillotte!*”

“What, has he not his feet in hot water already?” cried the daughter.

Globowsky turned on her savagely. “*Microbe d’Amour!*” he said. “It is not from you one will catch the disease!”

“And to think,” put in the landlady with fresh tears, “that the poor man will never know the end of ‘Maman Sabouleux!’”

The door burst open, and Jack strode into the little parlor. He walked up to Globowsky, so close, that the Pole stepped back.

“Murderer!” said Jack.

Globowsky got behind a little table before he quietly made answer: “Article 376 of the Criminal Code.”

The reply was so entirely unexpected, yet so evidently prepared, that Jack stood nonplussed. Besides, he scarcely caught its meaning.

“Two witnesses!” continued the Pole, pointing right and left. “Not that I mind! You, you are a doctor *pour rire*, an English doctor, of the nation the most backward—you know nothing! You measure your medicines in ‘avoirdupoids!’—Pouah!” He got behind two tables. “Prove! what will you prove? Did I want the man to die?” He repeated this in French. Madame Burlubaux nodded violently. “But for this incident he would

have recovered: he was on the highway. There is often such an incident. Bah!"

"Look here!" said Jack Russett, "there's a man lying dead upstairs whom I honor: we can't have a row in the house. You see my fists are deep down in my pockets, as deep as I can get them. I'm going to work them up as slowly as possible, but I advise you to be gone before they're out!"

"Measure in all things!" replied the trembling Pole, quoting the dosimetrist motto. He retreated to the door amid the scornful sniffs of the Microbe, while his lady-love called after him: "Forget not your comforter!" He stooped to pick it up and fled.

"Madame!" said Jack impressively. "*Pas ce Pole ici avant la funéral.*"

Madame Burlubaux was going to protest indignantly against such plain speaking, but dear me! there was so little else that was plain about Jack.

"What avails fussing?" she said mollified. "It is always when they get better that they die. Speak not to me, a doctor's wife, of doctors: you can do nothing. Such is life." She sighed heavily.

"His wife was devoted to him," answered Jack.

"Ah yes, devoted: that is the word—as to a father!"—Jack started—"Well, she has her young life still before her, *pauvre chérie!*"

"There are these papers to sign," said Jack curtly, "and somebody is coming, it appears, to seal up things?" He had the whole pack of wolves at his throat already. Life is dear to us all, especially on the Riviera, but death, especially on the Riviera, is dearer still. Jack fought with his back to the wall—*i.e.* his consul—but the scramble for plunder is more or less organized, syndicated, official: his heart bled to see Lucia's small purse torn out of his hands and flung back empty in his face.

"As for me, I refuse, though they boycott me, to touch my '*allocation usuelle*,'" cried the still-weeping Mme. Burlubaux to Euphrosyne—"it is an infamy!"

"It is four hundred francs," said the practical Euphrosyne.

"It is your share of the spoil," said the grinning Pole, outside the window, with glances up the road.

Madame Burlubaux did not look kindly at him: "Go away," she said, "or the young Englishman will come round the corner and beat you."

The young Englishman had other work to do, which he liked less. Ere the body was cold, the cold earth claimed it. The transport takes place at night from this city of the dying to the city of the dead. Next morning, with the glorious sun overhead, on the mountain crest above the blue water, they laid the foreigner in his hurried grave, half a dozen of them round his pale, calm wife: Globowsky in glossy black "to avoid a scandal," Madame Burlubaux with a great imitation violet cross. Lucia's offering, placed in the dead man's hand, had been a bunch of gardenias. She had her mother with her, for Mrs. Blandrey had felt there were limitations. "Yes. There is no limit to a mother's love," she had said, as she got out, properly draped, at the Mentone station.

Jack Russett, coming up, hot and fagged, to *Les Charmilles* after all was over, to say good-bye, found two rival statuaries clamoring to see the widow: he drove them away. "If the House of Death be the House of our Father," he said to himself, as he watched the discomfited figures, "these people have surely succeeded in making it a den of thieves." Then he walked very slowly into the little sitting-room, in which they had lived and suffered half a lifetime together, in a week.

"I tell my daughter she must come back at once with me to Monte Carlo," said Mrs. Blandrey. "It is very, very sad, Lucia, but Henry was considerably older than you."

"I loved him," said Lucia.

"Of course you did. I have always loved my husband"—even Mrs. Blandrey blushed, remembering too late the little complication about Lucia—"I mean: there is something I must absolutely tell you before I leave: it is my duty. But your affairs first! I am sure we are exceedingly grateful to you, Dr. Russett. Do you go straight to London to-morrow?" She did not await

his answer—"I suppose so. Now, you must please let us know as soon as possible how we stand to you as regards *all* expenses? My dear Lucia, I must be practical. And, besides, it will do you a lot of good. I suppose you have money enough to pay up here?"

Lucia looked very uncomfortable. "Not nearly enough," she said. "The expense has been tremendous! Dr. Russett has most kindly advanced some of the money he spent. If you——"

"Good accounts make good friends, say the French," adroitly interrupted Mrs. Blandrey. "You cannot owe money to this gentleman."

"Oh, it's only a trifle that can wait," put in Jack.

Mrs. Blandrey waved him magnificently aside. "My daughter must look at her husband's papers. Lucia, I have always taught you to keep accounts!"

"Yes, of course, I can keep accounts—why not?" replied Lucia quietly. "Henry wrote out a little statement for me before—the other day. I found it. He didn't feel up to talking about it, I suppose, or he hoped—I think—it wouldn't be required—so soon. Here it is." She drew a paper from the little work-table he had given her. "He says there is a will at home, leaving everything to me. He says—that is so like him!—it isn't much, but as much as he could make it." Mrs. Blandrey nodded approval. "He says: 'I shall be well soon'"—the speaker's voice broke—"but—but if anything were to happen to me, I should advise you to sell Beechlands for not less than nine thousand pounds and go back to Vouvray." She laid down the paper. "That is all I need read aloud," she said.

"Well," remarked Mrs. Blandrey, "poor Henry was infatuated about the man who murdered him. Not that these providers of sanatoriums are really to blame: it is your *malades imaginaires* with your call for them. When I'm ill, Dr. Russett, Dr. Rook makes me up a pill, cheap, and that cures me."

Lucia wiped her eyes. "Henry believed I could never live in England again," she said, avoiding the mention of Jack's father's name.

"Which is nonsense, of course," said Mrs. Blandrey, "but you couldn't live at Beechlands——"

"I would much rather quietly go back to Beechlands."

"Without Henry's income? Don't go!"—for Jack moved to the door—"We haven't done with you. Did you say that you were leaving to-night?"

"I have had a telegram which is pretty well a command," said Jack.

"You leave to-night!" repeated Lucia.

"Naturally," said Mrs. Blandrey with restrained satisfaction. "Your work here is over, unless, in addition to all you have already done for us, you should happen to know of a purchaser for Beechlands. It will prove a difficult house to sell, Lucia. I wish, with your evidently very moderate means, you were well rid of it."

"It isn't at all the soil that suits you," remarked Jack. "You got ill there."

"I know Henry had been vainly trying to dispose of it," said Lucia with what was indisputably a half-gleam of hope.

"Do you know if he had an offer?" asked Jack.

"Yes, he had, just before he was taken ill. He liked the idea: it was for a sanatorium. But I gathered that it fell through. When I asked him once, he shook his head. I am sorry."

"Sorry?"

"I mean, if Beechlands has to be sold, I should like it to be sold to that person."

"You can have your wish: I can renew his offer."

"You?"

"Bravo: let us hear!" said Mrs. Blandrey.

"Mr. Scragge is my father's agent. I was sent by my father to negotiate the purchase. The price was, I believe, the only obstacle."

"Oh, Dr. Russett must have it by all means," said Lucia. She strove to keep out of her voice, for the son's sake, all the rancor that filled her heart.

"Not under the proper price," insisted Mrs. Blandrey.

"True: I had forgotten about that. I am not at liberty, you see,"—she turned to Jack—"to sell it for less than nine thousand pounds."

"It is worth nine thousand," said Mrs. Blandrey diplomatically.

Jack Russett leapt. "I can offer nine thousand," he said.

Mrs. Blandrey clapped her hands: "I congratulate you, Lucia!"

"Thank you, mamma."

"You are certain you wish to sell?" continued Jack.

"No, I don't wish to sell, but I must."

"Which is the same thing, for a sensible person," remarked Mrs Blandrey. "That has always been my rule in life."

"I have only one condition," said Lucia, "that a man you will find there, called Busk, be kept on as head gardener."

"I venture to accept it, though, of course I am not acting for myself. But I have instructions about the payment of the purchase-money. My father is not a rich man: his command of capital is limited. He can put two thousand pounds down ready-money, let three thousand stand over on mortgage and pay the remainder in two hundred ten-pound shares, which are rising daily, which are worth fifteen pounds to-day, and which he guarantees will rise to twenty within a year."

"Hump! That is unusual," said Mrs. Blandrey. "Does he undertake to refund, if they don't?"

"Oh, naturally he would," said Jack.

"That's better. What shares are they?"

"Randjesvoort. South African."

"First rate. I know all about Randjesvoort."

"But——"

"Lucia, are you going to teach *me* finance? Me, who have built up a competency on nothing?"

"My father says it would be a ruinous pity to sell Randjesvoort," struck in Jack.

"I agree with your father. I have Randjesvoort myself: I wouldn't sell them for anything. You are making a good thing out of Beechlands, Lucia."

"So my father says. If only you knew him, Mrs. Lomas: he is the soul of honor. If only you would believe me!"

"I will believe you," she said.

"Thanks! Thanks!"

"Why, what rubbish!" remarked quick-eyed Mrs. Blandrey.

"My telegram demands a reply to-night. Yes or no, my father says. It seems he has another offer. I am leaving by the *Rapide*. Can you let me have the name of Mr. Lomas's solicitors? You are sure, quite sure, you accept our terms?"

"Leaving particulars to the solicitors," said Mrs. Blandrey.

"My husband wished it. He had spoken with you," said Lucia.

"Then I will telegraph. And now"—he held out his hand—"Good-bye!"

"Good-bye." They stood looking at each other for a moment: there were many things, too many, they might have spoken of. Mrs. Blandrey smiled uneasily.

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart," said Lucia, dropping his hand.

"You must forgive me as well," he entreated, taking leave of Mrs. Blandrey.

"What made him say that?" demanded the latter lady, as soon as the door had closed on Jack.

"He thinks he has made mistakes," replied Lucia unwillingly. "He might perhaps have prevented Henry's going out——"

"All that sort of talk is maudlin rubbish. People die because their time is come and not because they go out or stay at home. Well, so that's over. A curious experience!"

"Mamma, we might still call him back, if—if——" Lucia's face grew wistful.

"Call him back? What *do* you mean?"

"About Beechlands—you always said you were so lonely! If we lived together——"

"Too late, Lucia!" Mrs. Blandrey replied majestically. "If *that* was to be, Henry should have died a month earlier! I *was* lonely, very. That is the very thing I am anxious to speak to you about. I intend to marry again."

Lucia sank down on a sofa. Her last hope had left her.

"You might wish me happiness, Lucia."

"I do. I do."

"I feel for you: you feel as if everything had gone to pieces. I was just the same, when poor Harry died. But broken things mend. Or rather," she added carefully. "We get new ones."

"Who is it?" said Lucia.

"A Frenchman, eight years my senior. His name is the Comte de la Rochefeuilletas, one of the very oldest families in France. He is not rich. Of course I shall not live at home."

"Where will you live?"

"In Paris—and at Monte Carlo. I cannot but realize"—she looked pleasingly uncomfortable—"that there were difficulties. I have skipped over that episode with your father. He knows I have been married before."

"Ah, he knows that!" said Lucia.

"Naturally, seeing he knows about you! How annoying you can be, Lucia! And of course he knows I am a widow, and widows have usually been married before."

"He knows about me?" said Lucia, sitting up. "Forgive me, dear; I didn't mean to be tiresome. You have taken me by surprise. I do trust you will be very happy. Is the Count a Roman Catholic?"

"I don't know. Why, of course he is. Dear me, Lucia, I do hope you don't mind about that?"

"I suppose it doesn't matter much, if you are going to live at Monte Carlo."

"Only during the winter months. We shall have an apartment in Paris. What queer things you do say, Lucia! Now, really, in this last remark—just look at it!—there wasn't an atom of sense." Mrs. Blandrey contemplated her bereaved daughter with friendly pity. "Think how sad my old age would have been," she said gently. "You would soon, I hope, have left me again to myself!"

Lucia looked up, haggard. "I?" she said. "The doctors all say I have disease of the spine!"

"My dear child, what bosh! The doctors will say anything. If you'd been at all delicate, you'd have caught hemorrhage of Henry."

"Perhaps it would have been happier for me, if I had," answered Lucia, thinking of "Heinrich Heine."

But Mrs. Blandrey administered some salutary religious reproof and motherly sympathy and ultimately took her departure, much ruffled. The loss of a husband seemed insufficient excuse for such curious divergences from the sweet reasonableness which is, or which ought to be, the chief charm—to women, at any rate—of womanhood. She spoke from experience.

And, most of all, she regretted that her daughter should have been left so badly provided for.

Lucia sat motionless on the sofa. She could hear below, in the badly built house, Madame Burlubaux squealing with checked laughter, as she read. Outside were foreign noises. The next-door room was empty.

Before Lucia, on the big round table, stood a photograph in a leather frame. It was the photograph of a big white bull-dog with spindly legs and a prominent nose. And as she gazed at it, suddenly it swam away from her, behind a mist of tears.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MRS. BLANDREY walked into the vestibule of the Casino that same evening, the Count de la Rochefeuilletas by her side. They had dined together at her hotel, and the Comte had objected, with some persistence, to what he called "such a peculiar wind-up to a funeral," but Mrs. Blandrey had assured him that "nobody would see anything unusual in it in my country," always more or less a safe statement to make, "and besides," said she, "when can one have more need of distraction than after a funeral, and where can one find better distraction than at the Casino? Heavens, Dieudonné, what a stickler you are for the proprieties! And how absurd to a woman, the most proper that ever lived! I never did an improper thing in my life—mark that!—and I am forty-three."

"Do not become too young, dearest," he whispered. "It isn't—kind to me."

"You are very well-preserved," she answered, looking him all over in her downright manner. "At our age that is cause enough for gratitude." So saying, Mrs. Blandrey passed into the rooms.

The gambling rooms at Monte Carlo would be one of the very pleasantest places in which to spend an unprofitable hour, were they properly ventilated. It is said that their close atmosphere is intentional, lest the players should by any chance "keep cool." Such precaution seems supererogatory, for even in clean-aired surroundings the three unrecognized advantages of the bank—non-emotion, non-suspension, non-limitation—must complete the certain victory prepared by the *zéro* and the *refait*. Nobody can win against such odds, but by luck. Nobody has

luck always. The only way to win, therefore, is to happen to start playing at a lucky moment and to leave off the instant your luck forsakes you. It was Mrs. Blandrey's good fortune early to have grasped this decisive truth. Unaided, she had realized the futility of all thinkable systems, "as long," she said, "as two and two, in arithmetic, make four." So she had always played up bravely to her chances. Did she not owe her escape from widowed indigence to that first successful leap at Monte Carlo? The fact had got known; the administration likes that sort of *on dit* about the place. The croupiers called her attention first, if they could, to a vacant seat. "I like Monte Carlo," she frankly averred. "No, I will *not* speak of it as 'monty.' My recipe? Oh, quite simple. Luck and Pluck."

She now moved through the crowded rooms in the black dinner-dress of much flimsiness and modified sparkle, a black cloud of feathers on her brilliant cloud of hair—a costume which might be mourning as times go, and which might not. The few chance acquaintances with whom she exchanged a word or two knew nothing of the son-in-law, put away that morning in the still Mentone cemetery, nor could they have smiled or sighed, had they known. The only death that diverts the world of Monte Carlo is a suicide.

"Let us go!" repeated Mrs. Blandrey's elderly lover at her elbow: his Catholic courage quivered at the prospect of marrying this atheist who ought, he felt, to be praying for her dead son's soul.

"Pray?" she turned on him, "I am going to *work*! Which is better?" Without awaiting a reply she flung a louis on the red. As she did so, the little ball dropped—"Rien ne va plus!"—it ran into the red.

"That is right," said Mrs Blandrey softly: she picked up her two gold pieces and deposited them *en plein* on number seventeen, the number of poor Henry's allotment in the new Mentone cemetery. Out it came. The croupier, a fair man with a moustache, whom she rather liked (an important point, as all gamblers are aware) looked round and smiled. She smiled, too, very

gravely. And presently she played the number of Lucia's age, successfully, with a hundred francs twice in succession, and then the number of the parson's hymn at the little burial service—that failed her. Her *flair* was beginning to attract the usual discomfiting attention among the undignified rabble of the roulette: grubby females moved their silver to her numbers, thereby “cutting” her luck. She withdrew to the stately seriousness of the *trente et quarante*.

“Leave me, if you please: I want to be alone,” she said to the wondering Dieudonné. “I have my idea: let me work it out. Go you, meanwhile, and pray that it succeed! You are devout: I like that in a man of your name.”

Somebody rose: at once she took the seat, in grim earnest, staking her big winnings of the roulette.

But here the tide turned against her. In the dignified silence of this comparatively secluded corner, stuffy, like the whole building, brilliantly lighted, hazy, heavy, among the bright dresses and the sodden faces and the universal air of affected indifference (with passionate expectancy peeping underneath)—in the crowd, and the heat, and the gilding, she sat playing a losing game to the click of the little gold pieces, the rustle of the paper, the monotonous chant of the impassive croupier. On it went—on—on—in the dull Monte Carlo duel, which is frequently only a pastime but which, at any moment turns suddenly, unexpectedly, unnoticed, to a struggle for life or death. Others were playing high—perhaps higher than she—nobody especially observed Mrs. Blandrey. Nor did she, in that breathless atmosphere of universal greed, deserve unusual notice. A white-faced, pink-cheeked youth close by was evidently losing beyond his means: such a daily sight!—people watched, half pitiful, half diverted. Mrs. Blandrey felt heartily sorry for him. Still more did she wish he would leave off spoiling her luck. She pushed her stake across to the black, but not with the right kind of faith. “*Rouge gagne et couleur*,” said the droning marker. The flushed youth checked a gasp of relief. Mrs. Blandrey quitted the table. She was one of those who risk life, if you will, but not death.

"There's a man at the other end has won heaps on the black," said a cheerful voice behind her: she glanced round at the speaker, one of those goodlooking, if not good-looking, Cook's tourist sort of women who trot about and "study the gamblers," and who ought really not to be allowed inside, because they provide proof that, amongst some surroundings, it is possible to look offensively decent. "Oh, John," continued the innocent body, "how miserable he must feel!"

Mrs. Blandrey's eyes traveled down the line on her side, past the little cluster of croupiers. The man "who had won so much on the black" at once pushed back his chair and came towards her.

"Surely this is not a coincidence again?" she said, annoyed.

"No, it is not," replied Lucius Monck, a little out of countenance, "I knew you were here." They fell back, to the lounge against the wall, out of hearing of the preoccupied players.

"You dog me! That is against every rule!"

"We made no agreement not to meet. Our only agreement was about Lucia!"

"Written or not, surely the very first claim a woman has who was and is not——"

He checked her: she was too evidently ruffled by her losses. "Calm yourself," he said. "Shall we go out on to the terrace? It is cooler there."

"I prefer to sit and rest here. I don't like nature at night."

"Ah—true! One forgets things. It *is* long ago, isn't it? I am sorry if I incommode you." He sat down beside her and speaking softly but with a feverish fervor: "I've promised you more than I can keep to," he said. "I—d——it, I have a right to know about my own child."

She trembled at his suppressed violence: she had always deemed him the frigidest of men. "Since when do you swear at women?" she faltered.

"I most abjectly beg your pardon. I had not the faintest intention to swear at anybody or anything, but myself."

"It was no promise to me, that about Lucia. It was your own idea."

"Perhaps you are right. Perhaps it was a little of both. At any rate, I can't go on any longer. I want to know about my child."

"That was no reason why you should play against me at the tables!"

He smiled. His was a melancholy, contemplative face: it had a pitiful smile. "I plead guilty," he said. "I couldn't resist trying, just for once, your fate against mine. I'm always so desperately unlucky, I felt sure I must bring you luck."

"You didn't! Far from it!" she replied hotly. "I had won seven thousand at the roulette: I should have made it a hundred thousand at this table to-night: I felt I should—I knew I should, when you stopped me! I shouldn't have staked a louis had I known!"

He sat looking wretchedly contrite: she was far from pitying him. "I had no idea you gambled," she added. "A man so rich, and so careless about money, as you!"

He lifted his weary eyes to her face. "I am sorry. No man has a right to win such sums from a woman. If only you would allow me"—embarrassed, he half drew a filled fist from the pocket of his dress-jacket—she checked him, flushing red.

"I thought you knew me better than that," she exclaimed. "And after all, it is not me you've injured"—something very like spite flashed across her comely features—"I was playing for *her*!"

"*Rouge gagne, couleur perd*," said the distant voice of the croupier.

"You see!" she cried, perturbed beyond endurance.

He did not like the outcry. "Is it too much," he asked gently, but with gaze intent on her, "if I beg of you to explain?"

"I believe you deliberately followed us to Basle," was her reply.

"No, on my honor. It is true that I saw you, by chance, at the station there, and broke off my journey south for one night. What of that? I wasn't much in your way, and not at all in hers. Speak, does Lucia need money? I always under-

stood her husband was wealthy. Poor people can't go to Vou-vray."

"Her husband is dead."

"Poor thing!"

A face or two turned from the table. "*Rouge gagne*," sounded across, "*et la couleur!*"

"Poor thing! Poor thing!"

"Didn't you see it in the papers?"

"I never see a paper. It is difficult enough anyhow, nowadays, to keep one's mind clear." He turned eagerly: "How is she? Can she walk?"

"Oh, she's exceedingly nervous and fussy about herself. That Swiss doctor spoilt her, made her lie down——"

"Can she walk? Is she stronger?"

"I believe so. And he practically murdered Henry. Made him do all sorts of foolish outdoor things. They killed him."

"At Peysonnax?"

"No, they came to Mentone. Don't: you will attract notice! A young doctor came with them. He had every care."

"Where is she now? This is—how long ago?"—he glanced at her dress.

"*Rouge gagne, couleur perd!*"

"We buried him—poor fellow!—this morning."

"Good God!—and to-night——!" he restrained himself. "Lucia?" he faltered. "This doctor is with her?"

"Certainly not. He came away before I left. He returns to England to-night."

"The poor child, then, is alone there to-night—with her husband's grave!"

"Am I to take that as a reproach? Surely you must admit that you——"

"Hush—don't! In all honesty, consider that you have never heard me reproach any one, not even myself. Pray let us confine ourselves to facts. Lucia, then, is at present, alone at Mentone, what a place to be buried in, unless you're dead!" He took a few steps, as if walking away.

"Rouge gagne, et couleur!"

He turned back. "Excuse me—it is an item—she has money enough?"

"No!" cried Mrs. Blandrey, entirely exasperated by the continuous run on the red. "Has *anybody* money enough for a death on the Riviera? She's borrowed from the doctor! All this sickness has entirely upset their finances. She is going to sell her house—has sold it! It was that I was playing for, and you came and turned my luck!"

He lifted his hand as if to ward off the storm, but his gaze into her animated face was full of a veiled admiration.

"Did you say 'going to sell' or 'has sold?'" he asked. "You see, there is such a difference."

"She has arranged about selling it, just before I came away, to that young doctor. It is very hard on her. But by far the best. The Beechlands episode is over."

He nodded. "Number One. Number Two," he said. "You take life in chapters." He sat thoughtfully crackling the bank-notes amassed in his pocket: his quondam consort eyed him with amused disfavor: she had little patience with a nature such as this, that held all the trumps of existence and didn't care to play.

"Rouge perd: couleur gagne," droned the machine at the table. Mrs. Blandrey smiled at the break in the interminable *série*.

And she smiled again, with a woman's pardonable pride, as the jealous Count came hovering near: her *tête-à-tête* with Lucius had lasted long enough. "I must introduce you two gentlemen to each other," she said with a secret twinkle. "Mr. Monck. The Comte de la Rochefeuilletas." She marked with satisfaction the question and answer "An adventurer? Not an adventurer" flash across her English husband's eyes as he bowed.

"Are you not leaving? Are you not worn out?" asked the Count with insistence.

Lucius Monck comprehended that this foreigner knew how Mrs. Blandrey's day had begun: he bit his lip. "One moment!

Excuse me!" he said. "Where did you say Lucia lived at Mentone?"

"Number 63 Avenue Jules Grévy: I don't know the name of the house. Why?"

"Oh, simple curiosity." He did not expect her to believe that: he left her wondering.

He got his hat and, glancing at the clock, walked out into the open. Barely ten. By the electric glare outside he looked up trains. The next was eleven five: it would just miss the London express.

The soft Southern night was full, as ever, of warmth and brightness. Countless well-dressed figures glittered, laughing and chattering, among the lamps and the palm-tress: opposite glittered, right and left, a confusion of carriage-lights. A big red motor waited a few yards from the Casino steps. Lucius Monck walked up to it. "Will you take a hundred francs to drive me across to Mentone?"

"This is a private motor," retorted the offended chauffeur.

"So I presumed. Well—will you run me to Mentone for five hundred francs?"

"Monsieur——?"

"That is my final offer. Leave a message with the *portier* that something has gone wrong with the machine but you will be back in half an hour. Your master will expect it to take you longer."

"Monsieur, I am an honest man."

"That is an unusual coincidence, as you will admit. Consider! Five hundred francs?"

"Not for five thousand."

Lucius sighed. "You could not, possibly, recommend me to a less unusual colleague? One of the gentlemen opposite?" He nodded towards the long line of lights.

A voice said at his elbow: "Monsieur seeks a motor-car? For Mentone?"

"Yes: how so? I made sure that nobody heard."

"Some one always hears at Monte Carlo. And monsieur

is of an *insouciance*! *Tenez*, you have just dropped this from your pocket!—a bill of a hundred francs!”

“Keep it: where is the motor?”

“That is but reasonable,” replied the shady individual, putting away the banknote. “The motor is round the corner. When I whistle, come!”

“I will come now,” said Lucius distrustfully.

“Give me your word of honor not to move till I whistle.”

“My word of honor?” began Lucius haughtily, but the man’s tense manner arrested him. “Well, so be it!” He lit a cigarette. “I wonder what difference these people see between a man’s word and his word of honor,” he mused. “Some gentlemen see a difference, I am told.” Then he fretted, a few moments, facing the clock. A note of call reached him from somewhere: he rushed down the incline beside the Casino: half hidden against the basement stood what looked like any ordinary electric landaulette. Two men were hurriedly putting up the hood: one of them was in the bright uniform of the Casino police. The other turned furiously: “You promised——”

“I made sure I heard the whistle,” said Lucius, drawing back.

“*C’est fait*,” said the gaudy policeman, clinching the hood. “Monsieur goes on the box?”

“The gentleman inside does not wish to be disturbed,” said the other, who was only one of the countless Casino spies.

“Quite so, but we start at once,” replied Lucius, already seating himself beside the chauffeur.

“*Allez!*” called the detective. “On arriving monsieur will give you five hundred francs!”

“Six hundred, if we get in before ten forty-five!” said Monck, watch in hand. At these words the impassive chauffeur touched his cap, and the motor glided out from behind the shrubbery and up into the road to La Condamine.

CHAPTER XXIX

AN electric landaulette is not the quickest form of motor-car, and the swiftest motor feels slow, when you're in a hurry. At its best, a motor, going sixty miles an hour, soon loses, from very smoothness its first impression of rapidity; a bumping railway-train is better: every bump seems to tell you you are hurrying along.

"It's like my luck to have got an electric thing," said Lucius. He must catch the English doctor, repay him, stop the sale of Lucia's house. And then he must withdraw, unless—unless Lucia bade him remain! He felt that he had forfeited all claim, and he would have reproached himself, had this not been against every rule of his life. Besides, self-reproach calls forth immediate self-defence: he had acted with all the generosity of a noble nature in abandoning his daughter to a mother's undivided love. What more fatal than the bandying to and fro of a child's young heart between two antagonistic camps? With a man's lack of discernment between loves and loves he had believed Mrs. Blandrey's nature to be an essentially affectionate one. All the heart in him was now hurrying to his daughter's assistance. "But the worst claim of all is the pecuniary one," he thought bitterly.

"Votre machine ne va pas bien vite."

"Elle fait ce qu'elle peut," replied the driver.

They had passed by the closed shops and by the garish tenement houses: the villas were lessening around them: the patches of pinewood and thyme growing more fragrantly frequent. The road is never at any time a deserted one: there were plenty of lights softly visible, of noises softly audible even at this hour, as they ran along the tram-lines in constant twists and curves

among the oranges and lemons beside the sounding sea. From the great dark expanse of water a little breeze began persistently to pierce the velvet folds of lambent air. Lucius glanced back restlessly at the drawn blinds of the landaulette. "Of what nationality is the gentleman inside!" he asked suddenly.

The chauffeur was one of those unfortunate dependents whom total lack of imagination enables to lie only by silence. "There is no gentleman inside," he said.

"No gen—I had understood—— Oh, look here!—stop and let me get in. This wind is just cold enough to be unpleasant."

"I cannot let you get in."

"But why not?—surely if the thing is empty——"

"I have my orders. I beg of you not to ask."

The motor ran on for a little, round a tiny inlet and out into another; the mountains creeping down to it, the lights on every height. Like an immense illumination a million yellow twinkles garlanded the miles of twisting coast. The night hung blue about the motor lamps: the air was soft with scents.

"Are you from this part?" questioned Lucius, returning to the charge.

"I am from Monaco. Why?"

"Because a native knows about this climate as no foreigner does till he's paid to learn. A native knows that this sort of coat in this sort of wind ends in pleurisy."

"I cannot help it. Will you take mine?"

"Good heavens, no! Is it as bad as that? What deadly secret's inside?" asked Lucius, laughing. The man scowled, and changed his speed.

And, as he ran on, now through silent woods, a faint rustle was heard inside the vehicle. Both men heard it. Lucius, glancing quickly at the driver, saw his yellow face sickly over. The man stared straight ahead.

"Something moved inside," said Lucius recklessly, glad to tease, out in the cold.

"It is moving still." The rustle increased and was followed by a too audible bump.

"*Sacrés mille tonnerres!*" broke from the driver.

"The person inside has waked up: why did you say there was nobody inside?"

"Be silent, monsieur; drive with me to Mentone: pay your money, and go." The man spoke through his set teeth.

"So be it! After all, you are right," said Lucius.

"This matter may cost me more than the six hundred francs you have promised."

Lucius took out his watch: "It will probably be only five hundred," he said.

The chauffeur had somewhat recovered himself. "There is a bundle inside that must have slipped," he said. "It is nothing." But, even as he spoke with uncertain voice, and cautiously ran his motor through a little dell of olives, a tap, a distinct tap against the shrouded glass behind them, caused both men to start where they sat.

"Your bundle wants you to stop," suggested Lucius.

"*Sainte Vierge de Monaco!*"—evidently the Southerner in a real emergency, preferred prayerful appeal to profane swearing; he flung his machine forward downhill, as if trying to escape from the thing behind him. Again the muffled tick sounded, close and quite distinct. "*Sainte*—do you believe in ghosts?" suddenly demanded, with the fierceness of fear, the driver.

"Yes," said Lucius. "What is that thing tapping in there that frightens you so?"

"I am not frightened," replied the man angrily. "He is dead: he cannot kick."

"I now know who you are and I know what you are doing," replied Lucius, "I was aware this thing was done and denied. Your dead man has come to life: you must stop your motor."

For reply the chauffeur put one hand in his pocket. "You are talking I know not of what," he said. "There is no dead man and no—Great Heaven, what was that?"

Indeed, as he spoke, the side-window of the carriage was dashed out with a great clatter of glass, and an arm with a fragment of

violet curtain appeared waving and fluttering in the breeze. A voice breathed faintly but gutturally: "*Wasser!*"

"Put away that revolver again," said Lucius quietly. "I will get you into no kind of unnecessary trouble, but we must help the man inside."

"I cannot. I must obey orders. I must reach Mentone."

For only answer Lucius with a sudden movement stamped down the break.

"*Wasser!*" repeated the voice inside, more clearly.

"Get off then, if you will: I require not your money," said the driver.

"You shall have the money, but I think you had better get off first,"—with one of the swift swoops, mental and physical, in which this indolent being excelled, he snatched at the revolver that still protruded from the wide motor-coat pocket: "We don't want this absurd article," he said, "still—get off, please!" The chauffeur, who was one of those brutes that can sometimes bite but far prefer to fawn, descended growling: he opened the damaged brougham door. In the half-dark a black mass became indistinctly visible. As they stood there, uncertain, Lucius keeping between the driver and his seat, a deep groan burst suddenly from the depths of the carriage and quivered away on the silent night-air of Cape Martin.

"I suppose there is a lamp? Turn it up!" said Lucius. The driver obeyed, and in the full electric glare a tall form lay revealed, by its look that of a gentleman, hatless, recumbent in semi-consciousness, with a great scar on the forehead and fair hair clotted with blood.

"Is it a wound? A bullet wound?" Lucius turned angrily on the chauffeur.

The latter shrugged his shoulder. "I know nothing," he said, "except that he was dead. These imbeciles of doctors!—they never even know when one is dead!"

"*Wasser*" said the dead man, half opening pale blue eyes.

"I do not believe it is a shot wound: it is a bruise!" said Lucius, who had been putting aside the matted locks. "It is

a horrible hole in his head. If we could get him some water, we might go on."

"Water? I have water," said the chauffeur, and, under the muzzle of Lucius's playful revolver, he drew a can of oily liquid from under the front-seat. The German choked over some of this with a grimace: with more of the same thick fluid, Lucius cleansed the man's ugly bruise.

"We must take him out for a few moments and give him air," said Lucius. They deposited the heavy, helpless form by the road-side:

"*Ach, das ist gut!*" said the German, with closed eyes, tossing to and fro. As he lay there, the driver standing sullenly by, Lucius drew from his pockets a small case of white powders and mixing one of these with the greasy water he poured the mixture between the German's teeth. The effect was almost instantaneous. The sufferer lifted himself on one arm and looked round. "Where am I?" he said in French.

"A healthy man!" ejaculated Lucius with admiration. "Did I not tell you that your dead would come to life?"

The German attempted to rise, and, seeing Lucius in the light of the motor lamps, he stiffened himself in the manner of his nation to something like a military salute: "Von Plöck," he said.

"My name is Monck. Do you think, if I assisted you in, you could now drive on to Mentone?"

The German staggered on his feet. "I can walk," he said in slow French. "Mentone? Yes. Why Mentone?"

"It is nearest. And perhaps we can still buy you a hat."

"His hat is in the carriage," said the moody chauffeur, "I saw the policeman throw it in."

"The policeman!" repeated the German, sinking on to the leather cushions, "why a policeman? What has happened? Never mind. *Ach Gott!*" He lay back with wide-opened eyes, uttering rapidly, in his own language, words that were barely audible, evidently sense-conscious still. The motor recommenced its rapid descent, through the pine-woods of the promontory, towards the clustered lights in the broad Mentone bay.

The German lapsed into silence. Lucius furtively, and frowningly, consulted his watch.

"What has happened? Why am I here?" asked the German, in a far more natural voice, reverting to his laborious French.

"Can you not remember? I do not know."

"But why am I in your motor?"

Most awkward of questions. "I do not know in whose motor we are."

"Then let us get out at once," said the German, moving.

"No, no; you wanted to get away from Monte Carlo! Remember!"

"Monte Carlo!" The word was a recall. "I am ruined. I am penniless!" cried the German, "I——," he turned on Monck: "Do you know what I did? I was mad. Why am I with you? Where are you taking me to? What did they say about the police?"

"Hush! You are with a gentleman, like yourself. I will take you wherever you like. I should recommend my hotel."

"What hotel?"

"I don't know yet; we shall find out. Are your things at Monte Carlo? So are mine; a curious coincidence. But I can lend you some money. Ah!"

The last word was called forth by the sudden appearance in the distance along the viaduct of the swift trail of the light of the Paris express. Lucius felt that the motionless chauffeur had also perceived it, was gazing at it, persistently, with mixed feelings of satisfaction and regret.

"Why did you cry out?"

"Did I cry out? One ought not to. One ought never to cry out."

"True. One should kill oneself in silence. And kill oneself dead."

"I utterly disagree with you. The most silent suicide is the loudest outcry against God."

"God! God! What makes you talk of God?"

"Fate, if you prefer. But, when two gentlemen meet under

such very peculiar circumstances, they like to find they have a friend in common. Not that I can lay any claims to intimacy. Excuse me. Very much the reverse."

"You are right. I understand why you say these things. I thank you. I was a fool."

"I have never been anything else, so we ought to be friends. An hour ago I cursed my luck for causing me to meet an honest man, and now for the same reason I bless it. You see how unstable our judgments are. You will live to reconsider yours."

"I am penniless."

"That, also, is a fact to reconsider. And, when one is not thirty-five, it is hardly a fact but an incident. Personally, I must in all honesty admit I never was a pauper, but—dear me!—the happiest man I ever knew owned a crossing and leased a broom. This is the esplanade: I am rather in a hurry——"

"I trust I have not detained you."

"I forgot: I am not really in much of a hurry: still——," he let down the sash. "To the Avenue Jules Grévy, at the corner," he said. The motor whisked down a side street and stopped. The two men looked at each other: the German's clothes were all torn and soiled: his hands were black with dirt: his face was cut and full of blood: no hotel would take him.

"Do you get out? Let the German gentleman then get out also," said the chauffeur. "And give me my money, and without even another question, let me go!"

"Why question?" said Lucius. "This gentleman fell over the parapet in the gardens and I, understanding him to say that he was staying at Mentone, offered to take him there in this motor I had hired from you. There is nothing to question about, that I can see."

"*Bien*," said the chauffeur, "are you going to get out?"

Lucius had restlessly reflected on his predicament. He had missed the English doctor for one thing: all the more did he yearn with a craving he from the bottom of his heart thanked this German for mitigating, to find himself face to face at last with his daughter. "I cannot wait," he thought. "And, besides, she

will be going to bed. She will have gone to bed already. I am a fool, as usual, now I have missed the train, to go on at all!"

But at this moment of utter uncertainty there came to him completest deliverance in the form of a stout gentleman slouching on a nightly way home along the boulevard and never not on the look-out for a job. This gentleman having gone by slowly staring, stopped and retraced his steps.

"Are you looking for a doctor?" he asked.

"No," said Von Plöck, awaking from his supineness. But Lucius answered as quickly: "We want a quiet lodging for the night."

"I can provide both," said Globowsky with an epigrammatic clinch to the situation, and he offered a hand to the tottery German, fondly eyeing the bruises all over the victim's face.

"Your six hundred!" said Lucius to the chauffeur, "for the delay was of my choosing, and this little toy, and one word of perhaps superfluous advice: Talk as little as I shall! Good night." He followed the others. "A curious position," he said to himself, "for a man who dislikes things to happen!"

The German lurched in the Pole's tenacious hold. "Where to?" cried Lucius.

"Here!" said Globowsky, turning into number 63.

Madame Burlubaux stood at the door, much interested. Always she was of an interest excessive in the doings of her neighbors! "Go thou," she had said, "regard carefully that strange motor at the 67: I doubt of the woman with the golden *tignasse*."

"The very house!" said Lucius, turning sick with the leap of his heart. He tried to steady himself by the railings. His daughter! Since she had spoken to him at the Basle station he had not been able to banish her from his thoughts and his sight. He who had spent a life of loveless yearning for a love that never came. Was he going to find love at last? Or would she turn from him—a disappointment!—or perhaps even he from her? At any rate she had need of him: he could do something for her: money—that is always clear. He walked down the narrow strip of garden, wondering if the light up yonder at the window was hers?

"But yes, rooms, especially for invalids, always!" rattled Madame Burlubaux, "I adore invalids! I love nursing them. You also, monsieur, I trust you are sick?"

"No," said Lucius. "Can I see Mrs. Lomas?"

"Ah, the poor lady! At this hour! *Tenez* is there a light in her sitting room still?" She ran out: they stood looking up together. "Madame L'homasse!" screamed the landlady, whose thought was of the new arrival with the cuts all over his face.

A female form appeared at the balcony window, slowly opening it, but Lucius, in terror of the coming introduction in the street, pushed the astonished landlady aside, bolted up the short staircase and, opening what must be the right door at its head, found himself in the pension sitting room. Lucia turned from the window.

The dramatic *dénouement* sprang to Monck's glad lips, but he drove it back, gently careful of the fragile form in heavy black.

"Mrs. Blandrey said I might call," he remarked quite idiotically.

"The hour is—is rather an unusual one?" answered his daughter.

"True," replied Lucius, delighted by the very answer he himself might have given. "But the visit is also an unusual one. Perhaps, if you would sit down on that couch, I might explain. You do not happen to remember our meeting?"

She sat down wondering to see him so surreptitiously nervous, appreciating his resolve, like her own in such case, to appear calm.

"I think not," she said, disappointing him greatly. "Oh, yes, yes—of course, I beg your pardon! At the station at Basle. I trust you did not think me very rude?"

"It has been a delightful memory with me ever since!"

She looked a little surprised. "I am not very good at faces," she said coldly, "but of course I remember our first meeting quite well."

"Hardly that!" he said, and began, laughing, laughing—the more helplessly as he noted her wide opening eyes of horrified surprise.

"I can't help it," he said. "Only *I* remember our first meet-

ing, and you looked so very different. You cried then, and you have cried since, and O Lucia, I want you to let me help all I can that you may never cry again!" He had come nearer: though the light was shaded, she saw the love that flamed in his sad eyes. She half rose: she would have sunk back again, but he caught her in his arms as she flung herself forward and, holding her tight, he kissed her timidly on the forehead, as he had never in all his fifty years of existence kissed a woman before.

CHAPTER XXX

“ I HAVE telegraphed to Dr. Russett in London: the son had left by the night express,” said Lucius. “Of course the father will understand there was nothing definite. As your mother abandons you, my rights reassert themselves: we will go and live at Beechlands together.”

“He had left!” said Lucia, “I am sorry: I should have liked you to meet him.”

“And pay him,” said Lucius shortly. “I, too. I tried hard to be in time, but—something intervened. The something is downstairs at this moment: I must go and settle with it.”

“It—father?”

“Him. That’s right: it’s kind of you to humor me, Lucia. I shall not expect you to overdo it. You are sure you want to return to Beechlands?”

“Quite certain and sure.”

“Certain also that you will allow me to come with you?”

“Why it will be more your house than mine!”

“That is a consideration which would never occur to me—with my own daughter. I have never been very clear about *meum* and *tuum*. Or perhaps I should not so soon have given up just rights.”

“I have always been very sorry, and quite understood,” she said. He thanked her with a look.

“You must have loved me very much,” she added, emboldened, “to do it. Only great love makes such a sacrifice.”

“But I didn’t know what you were like,” said Lucius smiling. “You might have been very disagreeable, you know. Only when I saw you at Basle, I knew at once that——” He stopped.

"Say it! I think a woman likes to hear kind things said even more than a man."

"I don't know about that. Try me, Lucia!"

"Well, you set me the example first!"

"I knew at once that you were the most delightful woman I had ever spoken to."

"I can't beat that, for I have spoken to so few men, comparatively. And you have doubtless spoken to countless women all over the wide, wide world."

"Not so wide as you think," he answered very gravely. "Child, I must leave you now: I hardly can. You are dead tired. What a day!" He tore himself away, to hear from the expectant landlady that the poor German invalid was sleeping, "Like a child that snores!" "*Un Prussien*, but I forgive it him! Did not my lamented husband, le docteur Burlubaux, of the Academy, write a eulogy of Pettenkofen? But of that some other time. You will find your bed of the most comfortable: with my own hands I have put in a *bouillotte*."

"Is it the room Mr. Lomas died in?" demanded Lucius on the threshold.

"It is not, but what matters that? Tuberculosis is not infectious. Le docteur Burlubaux——"

"How does Mrs. Lomas strike you—is she ill or well?"

"Madame?—she needs only good treatment. She should put herself in the hands of the great doctor Globowsky. The dosimetrist. You have heard speak of dosimetry?"

"I have. It occupies all the forty-eight hours of an invalid's day, and that is a distinct advantage. Are the Prussian gentleman's bruises to be treated dosimetrically?"

"Ah, you laugh! But I wish you a good-night, monsieur: they laugh only, who have never been ill."

Never ill! Lucius sighed, as he began to undress. From the side-pockets of his dress-jacket he drew out bundles and crumpled masses of bank-notes: out of the inner pockets he dragged some untidy handfuls: more came from the deep trousers-pockets: the reckless heap lay thick upon his chest of drawers

like the overturned contents of a paper-basket. There was so much of it that even he, improvident as he was about money, walked across and locked his chamber-door. He felt that it would amuse him greatly to spread it all out neatly, and count it up—his gains at Monte Carlo!—but the thing was beyond him, at any rate to-night.

"My dear Lucius," he said aloud, "you know perfectly well you have never been able to count things. They add up differently every time. Yet some people say there's nothing more certain than arithmetic! And when you've added it up biggest, it's all gone!" With far greater solicitude he drew out the little case of powders, from which he had doctored the German. "Only three left!" he said. "It is high time I should get some more. If it weren't so incredibly far! Well, well, a man will go to the end of the earth for a chance of life." He turned to the confusion of bank-notes. "Much use you would be," he said, "without these!" and, caressingly, he touched the little case of powders, a narrow gold sheath of Oriental workmanship, with Arabic figures, curiously marked.

Somebody knocked at the door, and, forgetting his scattered wealth, Lucius flung it open. Globowsky entered with a smile or two and the most inevitable necessities for the night. The first thing Lucius saw was a large red monogram. The first thing the Pole saw was the heap on the chest of drawers. "Madame Burlubaux sends these," said the Pole, bowing deeper. "You need not be alarmed: the patient was nowise infectious."

"Thank you." Lucius laid down the shirt. "And the gentleman next door?"

"Has a hard head, the sort of head to fall on for those who would fall on their feet. A week's rest and careful dosimetry will cure him. Articles of value may be deposited with the landlady."

"You have treated Mrs. Lomas, too?"

"Had I done so, she would have been well by this time.

"Or like her husband," said Lucius, losing patience.

The Pole threw up two deprecating fingers: he could not be

rude to such a pile of bank notes. "I had not a free hand with Mr. Lomas," he said, "another person was always interfering. In the multitude of councilors is wisdom, they say, but in the multitude of doctors is death. If Mrs. Lomas will spend the summer in Warschau——"

"Quite so. I am rather tired. Good night," said Lucius, but he opened the door, when alone, between himself and the so-called snorer. The German lay breathing heavily, wide-awake.

"Thank God you are come," said the German with difficulty, "I am ill."

"So I feared. I could not rest till I knew."

"The Pole or whatever he is has given me poison—it is choking me—here!"

"He has not given you poison. It is my fault," said Lucius, contritely. "I was so occupied with my own affairs; I thought he would only help you to bed. After the medicine I gave you, you could not take any other for four and twenty hours at least."

"I did not know," gasped the German. "Nor he!"

"I am very sorry I——"

"I suffocate!" cried the German, and threw his arms about.

Lucius, with a countenance of rare regret, had drawn the gold case forth and was meditatively separating the small, white papers, as if careful consideration could make four out of three. "Is your trust in me gone?" he asked at last.

"I cannot say. I know nothing of doctors and medicines—except that they betray!"

"That is something. I am not a doctor. But I know that a second of my powders will put you right again. Will you try?"

Von Plöck lifted his haggard, his bruised and distorted head.

"How do I know? You have already half killed me! You are no doctor! You may kill me quite."

"True, and only doctors are authorized to do that. What did you know more of this Pole, whose dosimetric rubbish you willingly swallowed, than of me?"

"Oh, I suffer; I suffer. I would—but you might kill me!" stuttered Von Plöck.

He seemed to read Monck's silence, for he continued: "You will say that an hour ago I wanted to die! It is time, but I do not want to be killed."

"I say nothing of the kind," replied Lucius quickly. "How you came by your accident is no business of mine." The German groaned. "Listen. These little powders mean life to me. I am very uncertain whether I ever can obtain more. I have three left. I will give you one to make undone what I have done. What can I do more?"

"If I am killed," pleaded the German, "what becomes of my penniless wife and children?"

"A rational objection," answered Lucius without a smile. He went into his own room, swept the great number of the papers off the cupboard and spread them out before the German. "You see these?" he said. "If I kill you, they are yours: that is only fair. If you are well you will return them to me to-morrow." He had an evening newspaper in his pocket: methodically he folded the bank notes into it, the German looking on with half-conscious eyes, and scrawled across the paper in large letters "*Ce paquet appartient à Monsieur von Plöck.*" Then he sighed, bored. "The woman's sure not to have sealing-wax," he said, as he rang. But "the woman," when she made a tardy appearance in a slip-slop condition which explained not one moment's delay, *had* sealing-wax or rather could fetch it from Euphrosyne, she used it, in the mysteries of her hair-dressing, for purposes no gentleman could betray. So the packet was sealed and delivered.

"I will wear it in the recess of my bosom," said the landlady scribbling a receipt. The German watched her with interest, striving to understand. He took his powder docilely, the moment the two men were alone, and shortly after, quieting down in his movements and his breathing, fell asleep. Monck threw himself dressed, into an arm-chair, to watch.

Opposite him simpered against the wall a young man and a maiden making love: "Jeunesse." The picture saddened him.

He gazed at the sleeping German whose disfigurement but very partially concealed his bright good-looks. Young people had a right to be happy. Well, he supposed he also had been young. Perhaps happiness was going to begin for him now. And he brightened up, full of wonderment and delight at thought of Lucia.

Life was going to change for him entirely: all his long loneliness was over. He was going to love his daughter; he loved her already: she would learn to love him. What, after all, was love? They were going to *understand* one another: that is the chief thing. There was going to be sympathy between them, the sympathy of humor and irony, and tearful pity, the great lasting link between thinking creatures, when the first flush of youth is past.

Thus his thoughts grew pleasant. He was not sorry that "Jeunesse," the silly, simpering stage, was over for both of them. He hoped she had "loved" Henry, though really, there were better forms of happiness than, say, Mrs. Blandrey's four marriages. Personally he supposed everybody was entitled to love's young dream! He groaned, but his eyes were not nearly as indifferent as he thought.

Towards morning, in the grey, cold twilight, the German awoke. He raised himself on one elbow, refreshed and calm, his breathing regular. He looked almost comic, with the dirt and bruises on his white face, like a copy of the Vatican Hermes, recently unearthed. When he beheld Lucius, in the big arm-chair, in crumpled evening dress, his blue eyes grew soft. "That was kind of you," he said, "did you sit up all night?"

"Only as much of it as was left or as is not yet over. I had to watch your breathing: I should have awakened you, had you choked."

"I am all right now: I feel wonderful. That is a marvelous medicine. What is it?"

"I am afraid you must leave me my secret. It is not procurable, anyhow."

THE NEW RELIGION

"I remember nothing of what happened between my—my fall and my finding myself in this room—how did I get here?"

"In the motor. There is nothing unusual in a man's acting and talking unconsciously when stunned."

"I owe you an explanation. And I feel as if I wanted to talk."

"You owe me nothing—except the packet downstairs! And make sure, if you want to talk, what you want to say."

The other lay back, closing his eyes. "You know that I did not fall; I jumped," he said softly. "From the Casino window. Why should I look you in the face, you who are a good, honorable man, and tell lies! My story is simple. I was an officer in Stuttgart: I loved my profession. My wife fell ill, of internal trouble: our professors said: the winter cold of Germany is bad for her. So I threw up my commission: we came here to spend six months at Nice. We have two small children, they are with her parents at Wiesbaden. My wife, she is quite changed here! The absence of the children has maddened her. The simple house-mother has become a lady of society here! Heavens! what a society! All day she lives in emptiness that costs! To get money for our debts I have taken to play. I play newly: I play badly, and yesterday I lost all."

"It is very good of you to tell me that."

"But you, tell me about that motor. I suspect the strangest things. I would rather know."

Lucius hesitated a moment. "A death, especially a foreign death, is an official thing," he said. "The authorities don't like big statistics of suicides. Nobody inquires about the number that occur at Nice or Mentone. They would prefer you to be found *here*."

"So they gave me a motor-ride," said the German.

"Do you know, I am not sorry to hear that you play newly, and badly, and have lost."

Herr von Plöck smiled rather sourly.

"You will find, if you really go into facts and figures, as I have done, that all those who have played systematically to win, have

ultimately lost. As an amusement which *may* turn out a windfall—ah, that is another thing!”

“Have you had such a windfall?” asked the German eagerly.

“Yes. And also big losses. But I have not played more than a dozen times in my life. And I intend never to play again.”

“Ah, one says that! One says that!” replied the German, turning to the wall. Presently he asked Monck to give him his torn coat off a chair and from its pockets he drew a pack of cards. He began laying out on the bed-clothes some of those quick, simple games of Patience which the French call “*réussites*.” “You see,” he said, after a moment, brushing up the cards. “They all succeed!” And again he commenced: “Red, Black, Red, Black.” “If I had but a louis left,” he said, “I could return this morning, and win it all back!” He half-rose. “Let me look in the other pockets! There may possibly be one!” As Monck brought the things, he turned the linings out—empty! “You—you might lend me a coin out of all the money downstairs?” he said, timidly, ashamed.

Monck did not answer.

“Will you?”

“No. I am very sorry to appear shabby: I can’t incur the—the responsibility.”

Herr von Plöck turned red. For a moment he bit his lips; then he said: “One does not do that sort of thing twice.”

“I am very sorry to have given you pain.”

They were both silent. In the ashen twilight Herr von Plöck turned up his cards. At last he said irritably: “See them now, how I am in luck! It is marvelous!”

“I will play you if you like, for the parcel downstairs,” said Lucius.

The German started. “I cannot,” he answered, trembling. “I have nothing to put against it. I have only my income from home.”

“Ah, you have that?”

“Yes, but it comes monthly: I have not the capital. How much is there in the parcel downstairs?”

"I do not know. But, you see, you have an income left, if you don't play——"

"My father's allowance, and my wife's——" said Von Plöck haughtily.

"Hear me! Do you play 'écarté?'"

"It is the game I play best, except 'Skat.' I never played anything else than those two till I came here."

"So much the better. I have also played it a good deal. It is the best game for luck and skill of them all. Will you play me—the parcel to be yours, if you win—and mine, if you lose, you——" Lucius faltered uncomfortably—"Allons: I am nearly old enough to be your father!—your word of honor never again to play anything but 'Skat!'"

"I am grateful to you for your past kindness, but I am not a child."

"You may be angry with me: you may insult me: I shall quite understand. But I offer to play you for all the money in the newspaper against your word of honor!"

"You have said enough. I am grateful, but I am not a child." Herr von Plöck threw himself round on his other arm and moodily resumed his trials of chance. Lucius stood debating whether he should go or stay.

"*Schon wieder!*" said the German under his breath, as the cards fell right; he lay lengthily shuffling the pack; suddenly he turned and "Cut for deal!" he said.

Lucius took the little heap. "Perhaps you had better verify them," said Von Plöck stiffly. "There are thirty-two."

"The King!" said Lucius, and went to turn up the electric light, hideous against the increasing dawn. He drew a chair to the bedside; they sat down to their game.

It was all over in a few minutes. Ecarté never need last long, especially not if one of the players be reckless. That Lucius, who dealt, should again turn up, and therefore mark, the King, was a coincidence displeasing to both players: the German flushed slightly and cast a strange glance at his adversary's apologetic face. "*Je'n demande,*" said Von Plöck.

"So much the better," thought Lucius: aloud he said with the right amount of courteous indifference: "How many?" and took no cards himself. Von Plöck made four tricks. At the next deal Monck played at once and just won, his antagonist's hand being even worse than his own. He therefore stood three to one, and the German's face grew livid as he jerked himself up against the pillows.

"The light is execrable," said Lucius.

"It is enough," said Von Plöck, "to go to hell by. I beg your pardon: I should not have said that!" Lucius made no answer: he took four new cards: they were certainly very bad ones: he lost. Von Plöck, having the King, ran up to three: the next deal, without interest, brought Von Plöck up to four: the decisive moment was come.

Lucius flung away three cards: yet he lost ignominiously. The German gave a great gasp of relief that he strove in vain to cover with a cough. Then suddenly he dashed his hand forward on the counterpane to the rubbish-heap, but Lucius was still quicker: in some confusion the cards fell to the ground.

"So much the better," said Lucius, as he bent to pick them up. "If I *have* made mistakes, I don't want my antagonist to spread them out in my face."

"I thought I saw the King of spades!" said the German with much hesitation.

Monck laughed awkwardly. "I don't always have the King. Did you think I threw him away?"

"No, of course, that would be '*verrückt*'." said Von Plöck.

"I don't know much German," replied Lucius, "but '*verrückt*' sounds exactly what it would be."

"I owe you what we call your revenge," said Von Plöck, "in any form in which you may care to take it?" He did not speak very willingly: he lay back, as if slightly fatigued. But he was bewildered by the eagerness of Monck's acceptance.

"Most certainly: I shall be very happy," rejoined Lucius. "There's about as much again on the chest of drawers in the next room. Let us play one game more, on the same terms."

"Excuse me: I meant a money stake, *now*," said the German coldly. "Your money against mine."

Lucius looked him in the face. "In any form I may care to take it in," he said. "I choose to keep to the original stakes."

"I refuse!" cried the German impetuously.

"Oh, all right!" exclaimed Monck suddenly in English. "As you remarked just now: every man has light enough to find his way to hell by!" He went off to his room, sick of the whole business. "*Bon voyage!*" he said prettily in the doorway. He had deliberately played to lose the first game: he would as deliberately have played to win the next. He was stronger than his antagonist.

"My dear Lucius," he said, as he threw himself on the bed, "not even the joy of finding a daughter excuses altruism—what a word!—in a man of your experience."

CHAPTER XXXI

“**A** FATHER! Thus suddenly from Heaven!” cried Madame Burlubaux. “Heaven is good. The father, doubtless, he liketh not funerals, or they would have postponed this one twenty-four hours!”

“I neither like nor dislike funerals,” said Lucius. “Not even, I fancy, my own.”

“Monsieur is a philosopher. I love a first-class inhumation! As for our own interment, we have little experience to go by.”

Lucius approved of this retort from the landlady and graciously suffered a *bouillotte* as a reward for it. He inquired after a reply-telegram and the clothes he had sent for, but found himself compelled to go and lunch with Lucia, in the uncertainty and the dress-suit of the night before.

“The lunch is—ahem—middling,” he said. “I trust you share my interest in creature-comforts? There is no worse affectation than for a civilized human being to pretend not to care what he eats. If it be true that a man becomes what he feeds on, then let our food be good.”

“I got a ‘diet’ at Peyonnax,” replied Lucia, looking up from her apple.

“And you stick to it here! Now that—forgive my saying it—is folly. These régimes are only intended for the place while you’re there: the man himself doesn’t for one moment think you’ll go on with them: no doctor does. They fit into the day’s work, and the cooking arrangements and—the expenses. When we live together at Beechlands—I wish that telegram would come!—I shan’t

mind much about one thing or another, but we must secure a good cook!"

"Father!" she said, and at the word, and the change in her voice, he understood that it was not sorrow for the past but thought of the future had kept her silent during their short, dull meal. "I've been thinking." She pushed away her plate. "It's not fair. Last night, in the sudden strangeness, I had forgotten! I am—not well. You can't come and live with an invalid."

He got up and began to pace the room. "Tell me exactly," he said.

"There is something wrong with my spine. I shall walk less and less. Then I shall lie for years on a sofa. Then I shall die."

She said it quite quietly: the thought was no longer new to her. And as he did not answer: "It makes me less sorry, perhaps, that Henry should have been taken. My illness troubled him so very much. It grieved me: I could not help it. But with you, it—it would not be fair." Still he paced the floor in silence.

"I am so ashamed," she said pitifully, "that, now you find a daughter, she should only be a bother. I have thought it all out. I shall go and live quietly somewhere with my dog."

He faced her. "There, you see," he said brutally, "you have nothing but your dog."

She gazed at him, distressed.

"And that decides me," he continued. "*I* might have doubted about the desirability of mixing up my soured, selfish, middle-aged existence at this stage, with yours! But it looks as if we'd only each other, Lucia, so the best thing we can do is to stick close. 'Twas good luck brought me here: here I stay!"—he sat down—"The world is so wide and so full we might easily drift apart."

"But consider——"

"*I am* considering—more than is good for my own health: my brains can't keep up the strain. But you can help me to come to a conclusion. I have been weighing pros and cons all the morning. Your health is the first thing. You don't, I trust, accept this verdict of the doctors as final?"

"Oh, father, I can't see any more doctors!"

"I sympathize with that cry. Think of your Aunt Ermentrude, who has consulted several dozen, and who still drives about in her bath-chair. I believe they are unanimous they can't cure her. Child, even if they are unanimous about you that is no reason to believe they are right."

"I suppose it would be a presumption," said Lucia smiling sadly.

"Never, never believe a doctor's prophecy till after it has come true!" he answered eagerly. "Nature plays the poor fellows the cruelest tricks. Did you mention the word 'presumption?' Presumption indeed!"

"I have not consulted many doctors. Only just these. Dr Vouvray said he would cure me, but I could not, I could not go back to him. I would explain to Henry. He has had great successes, but not with us!"

"You are sure—quite, quite sure about not going back?"

"Oh, how could I? Besides, I don't believe in him."

"Lucia, if there is any man you believe in, or think you could believe in, let us hurry to him at once. Belief is two-thirds."

"There was a boy at home," said Lucia wistfully, "whose legs had to be amputated, and he prayed, and they were healed."

"Faith is three-thirds," said Lucius.

She sat looking out to sea. "If we had but faith as a grain of mustard-seed!" she said. "But we haven't. I haven't. I don't see what claim I have, in a world of sickness, to be strong and well."

"I should like to see and talk with your boy."

"Yes, nobody ever accepts these things, unless they are actually present. I was present. And here is a letter from my friend. 'Luke Willes gets about all right,' she says, 'he looks very wan. Doctor Rook says all we want now is: Summer!'"

"Lucia, we will have out that dog of yours," he nodded to the photo—"and that boy shall bring him!"

"But——"

"But me no buts, or we shall never get on! I mean: not when I have a splendid idea!—which is only about once in six months. Is the dog not an experienced traveler already? They can join us at Marseilles: did you know we were going to Marseilles?"

"I thought Marseilles was such a horrid place?"

"So it is: we need only see it from the outside. From the sea, where it looks best. Now but me no buts, please! This is my plan. You need rest: I like rest. Let us get away from all these memories of turmoil for a month by ourselves on the Mediterranean. At the end of that time, if we have not quarreled, we may know that we can safely start house together. It is wise to try a test, and we could not find a better. You agree?"

"I don't quite understand? I certainly feel as if I could lie down with my face to the wall, I am ashamed to say—for months."

"I know the feeling: it ought to be humored till one turns round and feels for the bell. I have been thinking all this morning about a yacht in Nice harbor, that I was taken to see by a friend who didn't hire her. It bored me intensely: I had no idea I should so soon be rewarded for the interest I took in details, for his sake."

"A yacht!—all to ourselves!—oh, that would be——" Lucia's eyes shone—"Oh, father, are you as rich as that!"

Her father laughed aloud. "There's a lot of money lying in a chest of drawers up in my room," he said. "Oh, don't be alarmed: I've got the key." He held it up.

"It's a very poor key," said Lucia.

"There I recognize a virtue you have not acquired from *me*. Dear me, I shall constantly be discovering virtues, and they never will be mine—delightful! By seeing them in you I shall realize ——" he stopped. "We will telegraph to my lawyer to arrange all the rest, as soon as we have Dr. Russett's reply. And I will go and telegraph now at once about the yacht. And we will put in to Marseilles in a day or two to meet your friends. Mark how nice I am about the dog, of whom I am horribly jealous!" He walked to the door.

"You are nice about everything, too nice! My only fear is that you should not do all this for me?"

"I happened to want most especially to do it for myself I am only too glad to have found a companion. And such a companion!—no, not another word: You would laugh at me."

He left her, a little dazzled by this golden glow of sudden wealth at a moment when she was just, for the first time in her life, beginning to feel poor. Till a few weeks ago she had never thought about not having enough for her reasonable needs or about wanting more than was reasonable. The luxury of a yacht seemed as strange as the absence of a pony-trap.

Lucius, humming his cheerful way to his chamber, deemed he ought to look in on the invalid. He was rather disconcerted to find not only the bed empty, but the room. He passed quickly to his own quarters, and, as he entered, he at once noticed three facts. His portmanteau had come from Monte Carlo. The chest of drawers was burst open. A letter lay on the table. He opened the letter first. It was very brief:

"I have taken the money and am gone. I could not bear to meet you again. Forgive me!—VON PLÖCK."

"I suppose I must look into the top drawer," said Lucius. "Of course it is empty. So many of the disagreeable things we have to do are entirely superfluous."

He stood—gazing down into it. "Above all things, I mustn't tell Lucia. She would tyrannize over me at once and for ever. How easy it would be to catch that chap with the smashed face! Poor fellow!"

CHAPTER XXXII

UPON the blue-grey, wide expanse of water beneath the grey-blue, wide expanse of sky. Like a living, faintly throbbing thing—a shiny bird!—across the ripples—except that a bird, of its own sweet will, would break that steady line. Man alone holds on straight ahead, from nowhere to nowhere. The creatures dip and play across the limitless grey waste of water beneath the watchful sky.

“Lucia, are you awake?”

“Yes, father, but I pretend not to be.”

“I am sorry to hear it, for I am fast asleep.”

Empty air and an unbroken sky-line, a perfect circle of lilac mist. Not a sound but the monotonous beat of the engines: not a sight but the sparkle of the sun on the sea. A faint memory, cropping up, forgotten, of a ship that went by hours, nay ages ago, a memory, still fainter, of the far purple shades of some island, a meaningless, vague stain against the unfathomable distance, no memory of anything, since aught was worth remembering, but the emptiness, the silence, the wide circumference of light. The yacht moved on complacently. A rug slipped off—an event: Lucius rose to lift it on again.

“Thank you, father.”

“Lucia, I believe you would wake up to say that.”

“Waking or sleeping, I need never cease saying it.”

“Now that is quite wrong. I am glad you said that, for I can now explain to you how wrong it is, not just this moment, but some other time when I am better able to put two and two together——”

“And prove that they make five,” said Lucia. Her novel dropped from her fingers. Her eyes were closed. The yacht,

all white paint and burnished glitter, passed on and on and on. Through a dreamland of long, bright morning and of soft and silent night.

It was like Lucius to have stopped the clocks on board at the hour of twelve—midday and midnight, he said—and not to wind up his watch. "And I don't understand about their bells," he said. "So let them ring them. He that is happy counts no passing hours."

"How about the dinner-bell?" said Lucia.

"I shall always hear that. And, if ever I did want to know the time, though, frankly now! what *would* be the reason for my doing so? that watch on your wrist is painfully prominent and exact!"

Lucia drew down the white crape of her sleeve. "But you ought to be interested in 'knots' and things," she expostulated. "People on ships always hold their watches in their hands and stare at the horizon."

"Which horizon? There is such a lot of it."

"And there is such a lot of time. However much horizon there may be, there is far more time to stare at it."

Lucius opened his eyes wide. "The moment you get bored," he said, "we shall—what do they call it?—change our bearings. There is the Nice Regatta coming on——"

Lucia shuddered. "How can you speak of such a thing!" she said, "in this peacefully radiant loneliness, without a human sound."

"Except Rob's snore," said her father.

"Oh, well, if it comes to that, there are our own voices."

"And the dinner-bell," said Lucius. "*That* is civilization. Only humans like Rob and me know the meaning of the dinner-bell."

Rob, thus hearing himself personally alluded to for the second time, lazily opened one eye, presumably in placid inquiry as to this self-same dinner-bell. The sea, on the whole, exactly suited Rob. You barked at the gulls, which, otherwise, in no way incommoded you, and, for the rest, there were no intruders that

needed barking at. As for the limited company on board ship, these you divided—as in all societies—into the people who wanted to know you and the people whom you wanted to know. This latter class included (besides your own family of three and the uninteresting young man who had caused you to take a most unpalatable railway journey) the captain, because he was evidently a person of authority, the cook, because he was the cook, and lastly the cabin-boy, because that small personage seemed able to filch things. Not the sailors, who were common, nor the steward, who manifested an extravagant objection to a few hairs on his locker cushions. The steward was an exception: all the sailors belonged to the class that, with futile endearments, wanted to know Rob.

Did that intelligent animal, in his inmost circle of three, miss the Master? Lucia believed that he mournfully looked for him all over the vessel, but she kept her opinion to herself. The new male's behavior was correct and courteous but not interested: Rob felt that the inevitable interchange of civilities would ever lack the personal note. As for the third individual, an old acquaintance, he had always endeavored, even when she was brushing him the wrong way, to treat her with the contempt which her arrogance deserved.

The third person was Summers, reinstated, and thereby hangs a longer tale than Rob's. On the night of the funeral and of Mrs. Blandrey's ill-luck on the red, that lady returned to the Gloria Hotel in a quite unusual huff. She said that "Like the Apostle Titus she felt she had lost a day." As we grow older, we realize more when everything doesn't come right. Lucia had been very inconsiderate, after all her mother's sympathy and the terrible risk that mother had run: the meeting with "Number Naught" was an indelicacy on his part, and the playing at the same table was—was indecent! Mrs Blandrey wrote Lucius a brief note that night, requesting him frigidly "to spare her:" he found it in his hotel-packed portmanteau: "Well, that fits in all right," he said. The maid, summoned to do her mistress's hair, appeared with her unalterable countenance of

stony disapproval; she would have accepted a proposal of marriage or the news of a legacy with that same expression of knowing that the whole world was wrong. On the whole she despised Mrs. Blandrey's good nature as frivolous, but she was not prepared to find that universal condemnation included herself. But Mrs. Blandrey, angry with everything, said:

"Summers, you pull my hair!"

"Which I should have scorned," said Summers to herself, "to make any reply."

"Did you pull my daughter's hair?" persisted the mis-guided mistress.

"Mrs. Lomas had such beautiful hair. And so much of it," incontinently replied the maid. A long silence ensued, filled with an interchange of inarticulate unpleasantness. It was not till she was quite ready for the night—in fact, she was already installed in a much-pillowed bed—that Mrs. Blandrey decided to crush down the proud Summers, once for all, into the dust of domestic adoration.

"It is best you should be informed," said Mrs. Blandrey, "that my engagement is about to be announced to the Count de la Roche-feuillets de Dindonville." She paused for her words to take effect. "The French gentleman with the fine moustache who dined here to-night is the Count de la Roche-feuillets de Dindonville."

"The French gentleman with the white moustache?" inquired the immovable Summers.

"We have not yet settled," replied her mistress with some irritation, "when the marriage will take place. Of course it will be exceedingly quiet. You can reckon on our spending the spring in Paris."

"Yes, I shall have to reckon," said Summers. "What did you say, please, that the gentleman's name was?"

"The Count de la Roche-feuillets—Dindonville."

"Then, madam, I regret that I must give notice, for I could not possibly live with a lady whose name I shouldn't learn, if I tried all day."

"What nonsense! You need only remember the first half."

"The first half is more than I could manage."

"The Countess' will suffice," said Mrs. Blandrey a trifle consequentially, in pleased expectancy of the crush!

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I couldn't live with a French lady: it isn't what I've been accustomed to. Nor abroad. As Lady Symes' maid was saying at the *tably d'ho* this evening: 'they mustn't expect *me* to expectorate,' which is French for 'my native land, good night!' As the courier put it, who I told you always says those clever things: 'Angly tear, or ef-war' is well and good, but not 'Angly tear, a Jew.'"

"Please yourself," said Mrs. Blandrey angrily. "I shall certainly live abroad. At least, if you call Paris and the Riviera abroad. I don't. I should say you saw more English here than at Beechlands:"

"It's the English hair!" cried Summers.

"Well, isn't my hair English?" replied Mrs. Blandrey wilfully misunderstanding, from temper. Summers could not retort that much of it had been procured in Paris. She pitied her mistress's loss of dignity, which only revealed her annoyance at loss of so excellent an attendant.

"But please yourself!" repeated Mrs. Blandrey. "The chambermaid did my hair admirably the day you were ill." The maid resolved suddenly to have better manners than the mistress.

"The chambermaid is leaving, ma'am: the work is too much for her," she said politely. "If you wished to engage her, you had better inquire at once."

"I can't have two maids," replied the lady crossly. "You certainly are a superior person, Summers."

"Thank you, ma'am. You see, I've never traveled abroad, and hotel life and foreign ways don't suit English servants. I should prefer, ma'am, to find a lady who was returning 'ome."

"I will speak to the chambermaid to-morrow," said Mrs. Blandrey, sinking down among her pillows, suddenly pleased at the prospect of a French attendant, just as, five minutes ago,

the thought of an Englishwoman had seemed a relief. Next morning's arrangements proved most satisfactory. "As soon as you can suit yourself, you may go," said Mrs Blandrey majestically. "A person who is leaving me, I wouldn't keep a day." Quite in a good temper over the pretty French handmaid, she wrote an amused little note to Lucia, making scornful fun of "the stupid British creature's 'Angly tear, a Jew!'" She sent the note at once by hand with a basket of grapes, as she had constantly—be it said on her behalf—sent fruit, messages, flowers—especially gardenias—to the sick-room, which she dared not approach herself.

Thus it came about, that Summers, alighting at the Mentone station, beheld her mundane young mistress, an unknown gentleman, and an angular but demonstrative Frenchwoman gathered on the opposite platform by the door of a returning express. Trains always seem to meet and cross at every French station. Summers ran, with two officials shouting behind her, but she was one of those numerous English women who fear no official (foreign) shouts! She put in her basket of grapes, and she put in herself, just as the train moved off. In fact, for one moment she seemed inextricably mixed up with the weeping Madame Burlubaux in the entry: Lucius had a last vision, as the landlady staggered back, of a Catherine wheel,—spitting fire!

"That woman," said Lucius, "had the longest limbs I ever saw."

"And the biggest heart," said Lucia.

The next moment Summers had learnt that she had been present at a farewell, and that Mrs. Lomas was bound for the yacht *Bacchante* in Nice harbor, chartered by her father, Mr. Monck. The maid's countenance expressed no surprise. Not even when, thirty seconds later, the new-found father (whose languid manner fitted admirably into Summers predilections) had quietly re-engaged her, against her inclination, she maintains. In her present mood she took to him for his "muddle" with Mrs. Blandrey. "Any one would get into a muddle with that woman," she said. They dropped her at Monte Carlo to get her things.

"And I couldn't have done it, sir," she said, "not even for Mrs. Lomas, if it weren't for my petroleum pills!"

Lucia soon discovered that a petroleum pill, sympathetically tendered on the Channel boat, had converted Annabel Summers into an apostle of homœopathy. It was touching to see her go round placing her pills, with a tiny scoop like a bodkin, on the tongues of the grateful mariners.

The poor, in our twentieth century, are almost as much interested as the rich in the medication of their more or less healthy bodies. We are all introspective, and so we feel things. And the poor man's chief possession being his body, he is the more concerned to see it deteriorate. The sailors listened with interest to Luke Willes's blue-ribbon eloquence, because it was accompanied by a brilliant diagram of a drunkard's inside. A young one looked across at an old one. "So that's what Bill's liver looks like?" said Tom. Old Bill took his pipe from his lips. "You leave my liver alone," he said. "Your's is white." But neither signed the pledge.

And the Captain, a thin, little, sallow American, pitied from the bottom of his tender heart the young widow who lay out on the deck all day working things for the sailors' children. He was a modest, reticent man, and it took him quite three weeks to summon the courage he had sighed for on the second day.

"Wa'al, ma'am," he said, leaning back, as he stood by her deck-chair, and drawling. "All I can say is: there's hope where there's life! And sooner or later I'll cure myself somehow."

"Oh, I do hope you will, Captain Wicks," said Lucia.

"Physical culture'll do it, *not* pills," said the American, stretching his meager limbs and scornfully eyeing the distant Summers, "but the difficulty is for a man like me to get the right kind, out at sea!"

"I wish I could help you: I know so little of the subject," said Lucia, ashamed.

"Thank you, ma'am, but I guess I shall help myself. There's the advertisements nowadays to help one. I've got an old copy

of *Harper's Magazine*, and I'm going through the advertisements. I take 'em as they come, page after page, and I write and give 'em a chance. It's slow work getting through, but I've reached page forty-three. I had to miss out one—that was the Oxygen cure—'cause I couldn't, being a sea-faring man, have the ten cans brimful o' water standing in my cabin night and day. But I've written to all the vigor and energy, and personal influence people, and I'll get to the right man in time."

"How long has it taken you?" questioned Lucia.

"Two years and nine months," said the Captain, sighing. "I'm wearing an Energy belt just now. Would you like to see it?"

"Does it make you feel strong?" asked Lucia hastily.

"I could send it round to your cabin, ma'am," replied Wicks in injured tones. "It's 'stornary smart to look at, and worn next the skin. I fancy I've got hold o' the right thing this time." He gazed away, over the water. "But I won't deny as I've thought that before," he said wistfully. So saying, he courteously walked aft, for he wanted to dispose of a plug of tobacco, and he knew what was due to ladies.

To Lucia he was only a pathetic figure, as she lay thinking of all the expensive advertisement pages still left to essay. It was a relief to hear Luke Willes in the distance, singing, as he brushed her father's clothes, a slow hymn, out of tune. Luke Willes was established on board as a sort of rough valet, since they had picked up him and Rob at Marseilles a couple of days after leaving Nice. And they had also picked up a telegram.

"Regret impossible to annul purchase. Am writing.—RUSSETT."

"Your devoted young doctor was evidently a sharp man of business," said Monck.

"It must be his father," answered Lucia, greatly distraught. "He thought he was doing me a service."

"*La cour rend des arrêts et non pas des services*," quoted Monck savagely. "You'll find that between them; they've cheated you out of Beechlands."

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"Oh, not cheated, father! He couldn't deceive."

"The best men can deceive," said Lucius.

And Lucia grew suddenly silent, for that was the shadow between her father and herself.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"CHILD!"

"What is it, father?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all."

The *Bacchante* steamed slowly through the soft and silvery night. In the dark, blue firmament the crescent moon hung high, with narrow streak across the shiny water. Lower down, in tangled masses, the spangle stars spread far. The wavelets lapped the gently moving vessel. The air was warm and soft with silence and repose.

"It is like dreamland," said Lucia presently.

"To dream—ah, there's the rub!" There was such pain, such anxiety in his voice, it caught her breath. "It's a crime ever to wake any one," he said, "they *might* be dreaming pleasantly." He faced round to her. "But if the dream turns to a nightmare, better wake them at once!" She could not distinguish his face but in the soft dark she could watch his every movement. She possessed the beautiful virtue of silence: he could thank her for that.

"Nonsense," he said laughing loudly. "I beg your pardon. Let us talk of something else."

"Let us talk of what you like to talk of, father."

"Very well. Let me see! Do you know the stars?"

"I know those that everybody knows. The Great Bear over yonder and Cassiopeia behind us. And that, of course, is Perseus. And so on!"

"Do you know what Luke said when I tried to show him some last night? 'They may say what they like, sir, but they'll never convince me them's the *real* names!'" He laughed again

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quite boisterously: Lucia laughed, too. "Can you guess what he meant?" questioned Monck.

"God's names, I suppose," said Lucia, smiling still.

"Do you know? that never struck me. You are such a good woman, Lucia, far too good for a man like me."

"Oh, father, don't say such a thing as that?"

"Why shouldn't I say what every one must think?" A long silence. "Even you," said Lucius, very softly. Then a far longer silence still. A little ripple of wind without cause for coming or going. The long silver stretch of moonlight. And the changeless glide of the steamer through the calmly patient night.

Then at last: "I was looking at that Tauchnitz you are reading. I read a lot of it this afternoon."

"I didn't think you cared for modern English novels, father."

"I must say I prefer French. For the very reason that you prefer English. But the man in this book—what's his name?—Egon, the German chap—I suppose you disapprove of him altogether?"

"I think, of course, he did very wrong."

"Granted. And your sympathies are all with the injured wife, Dorothea?" His outline was black against the light on the sea: his gaze was far away across the water.

Lucia's answer came slowly. "My sympathies are with her and—and also with him. He was a good man, father, in spite of what he did."

"What! you think that is possible! Lucia!"

Lucia did not reply.

"Why, he broke the seventh commandment!—the only one (except the sixth which nobody breaks)—that we all feel everybody must keep!"

"Oh, hush, father—don't, don't!"

"Why, I thought you would loathe and abhor the poor husband, even though his wife took her share of the blame. What I like in the book is that both of them are quite decent people, and yet—and yet the thing goes to pieces, Lucia."

"But it comes right in the end!"

"Does it? I didn't get so far. It couldn't quite."

"Oh, why not? Why not?" Suddenly she saw, in a wild vision, her father and mother reconciled, re-married—and knew how wild the fancy was: she sobbed, in a swift gasp behind her handkerchief, choking, lest he should hear!

"For God's sake, don't cry!" he said.

"No, no—only, it seems such a pity there are so many things that don't come right on earth, though they do come right in heaven."

"When Christ had absolved the woman in the Temple," he answered, "what do you think her husband said to her?" He did not give her time to reply. "But her children," he went on passionately, "her children loved her and forgave her. Oh, I don't think they forgave her: we—we mustn't expect too much. But they understood her: and while they loved and respected their father as much as ever, they felt that he had never loved their mother quite as she wanted, quite as she needed, to be loved." His voice broke and resolutely steadied itself to the end. A night-bird swept past them with a low whirr of anguish.

Lucia clasped her hands tightly for one moment: "Her children!" she said. "Before Christ could have spoken His words to them, her children had thought His thought!"—she hesitated, wondering whether to kiss him at that moment might seem an impertinence—a kiss of forgiveness, of sympathy, of pity?—perhaps he comprehended her feeling, for he rose and walked quickly away.

She loved him already with splendid pity, in the serene condescension of her calm and lofty womanhood. For her love beheld in him—could she help it?—the man who had wronged her mother. In her eyes, doubtless, he had read till the pain passed beyond endurance, the sadness behind the love. And she thought she had kept it so well out of sight. She angrily reproached herself, and yet—and yet, when a pure woman like Lucia meets with facts such as these in her own life of love, what can she do but live through them? He was her own father, no longer a far fancy, a vague, black stain, but flesh and blood, loving

her, divorced, in the Law Courts, from her mother. The Law Courts! The thing that, in the newspapers, you turn from, like dirt.

He came back: he had lighted a cigarette. "Poor Lomas!" he said, easily yet with suppressed feeling, "to think what an innocent pleasure might have been his! I mean about the cigarettes," he added. "I was sorry."

"I know what you mean." Her self-sacrificing, single hearted husband rose up before her; a man who had never thought of himself, never lived for himself, the most faithful of consorts, after having been, for nearly fifty years, the most devoted of sons. "I have often wondered," she continued, anxious to change the subject, "if you would have come to me at Mentone, had I not spoken to you at Basle?"

"Perhaps not. So much the better, perhaps, for you. And for me! No, don't protest! As long as you didn't know me, you were free to think I was different. Well, if the sea has done you good, I mustn't care."

"The sea has done me lots of good."

"But not cured you. We must find out about that spinal trouble. I am resolved to find out."

"You never speak about your own health. You, who often look so fagged."

"My dear child, I have always been unusual. The people I know speak about their healths all day long in their pauses, between motoring and bridge. Even Summers gives me pills which I take, to please her—pin-head pills. And Luke has hung up a calendar in my cabin, with a daily text—his pill. I fear I think as little as I can of my soul or my body: I have never cared to contemplate ugly things. What I like is to be out of the fashion. I admit that that attitude soon becomes an affectation: I try to hope that it never has with me. A mode seems pleasing to most people because it is a mode: to me it looks tawdry on that account: I can't help myself. All this hygiene and health doesn't interest me in the slightest: we live till we die just the same—*voilà*." He pitched his cigarette into the water.

"But you talk like that, because you don't actually feel ill," said Lucia. "Henry and I never talked of our healths."

He answered brightly: "The peculiarity lies in refusing to *feel* ill. I am proud to think you share that with me. I assure you, nowadays people like to feel ill. When I walked into my London club the other night I found all the men sitting with little jugs of hot water in front of them. And I found all the servants were doing the same. The hall porter had one in his box. They said it cleared their systems."

Lucia laughed. "But you smoke far too much," she objected. "Fifty cigarettes a day."

He lighted a fresh one. "Who has counted them?" he asked. "Luke? That I, who never counted anything, should be boxed up in a boat with a Professor of Moral Statistics! A creature who keeps an account, in a penny note-book, of each sailor's goes of rum, of my cigarettes, even of the captain's little swears! It's duced hard on us, Lucia. ~~We~~ ~~men~~ aren't good enough to have the Recording Angel visible under our noses. A ship's too small. Even Noah couldn't have stood him in the ark." With an impatient puff at the fuzee he strode away and seated himself in the darkness, a meditative gleam.

In the silence and soft warmth and pallid moonlight Lucia, presently starting from a dreaming doze, cried out. For the spark of the cigarette shone on the deck like a fading glow-worm and the form of the smoker had fallen back along the vessel: his head hung over the rail. "Father!" said Lucia swiftly beside him. "Father, speak to me!"—both her hands were at his collar, fumbling, struggling aimlessly: she gently lifted his head. The face was distorted with an agony of suffering: the shoulders heaved in quick gasps: the whole left arm trembled from pain. "What—what can I do? If only I knew what I could do?" said Lucia.

"Nothing for the moment, ma'am," answered Summers' tranquil voice, "Mr. Monck will feel better in ten minutes. Yes, sir: don't trouble, sir. I'll look out a pill for you in my book." With "the so-called man-servant's" help she presently got the sufferer

away to his berth, where he lay in a condition that seemed nearer to death than to life.

"Is it asthma?" questioned Lucia of the authoritative maid.

"No, indeed, ma'am: it's Angelina Pectoris. You may be certain patient's had it before, and he's bound to have it again."

With the crumb of comfort in this conclusive clause Lucia endeavored to calm herself—an unprofitable task as long as her father was straining to indicate some requirement, the great beads on his forehead, the rending pain in his breast. Helplessly gazing at one another, his attendants stood sharing his distress.

"You know, I suppose, what your master wants?" snapped Summers to Luke, whom she persecuted as only a superior fellow-servant knows how on the gratuitous assumption that he was an accomplished "valley." Luke lifted his mild eyes from the form he was tenderly supporting.

"Oh, Lord, help us to understand!" he made answer. "Thou art mighty! Thou knowest all things! Help! help us to understand!" his lips continued moving in passionate supplication.

Summers stood rustling the pages of her homœopathic "*Vademecum*."

"An—," she muttered, "Angy—Angylina!" Lucia lifted her head from the pillow.

"He says: 'Pow——'" exclaimed Luke. "Leastways, he doesn't say it, but he means it. Oh, ma'am, he's trusting an All-powerful——"

"His powder!" cried Lucia. "Yes, father, yes—you shall have it! How stupid of us not to think he had a medicine! Look for it! Look for it everywhere!"

"I *am* looking, ma'am!" protested Summers, sternly peering over the top of her volume. "If caused by emotions, it's Spigelia; if by excess of smoking, Tabacum Six."

But "the Valley" was already thrusting right and left the bottles of wash-stand and dressing bag, Lucia chafed the ice-cold hands: suddenly she dropped them and drew from the waist-coat pocket of the recumbent form a little gold case which pro-

truded among the loosened clothing. The change in her father's countenance was her reward.

An hour later he was lying exhausted but at rest. He could breathe again: the threat of death was lifted from his throat and from his eyes. His daughter only, watching his movements, saw the soreness persisting in his left arm.

"Don't let that woman come near me," he whispered. "I want nothing. Not water. Not till I ask." Lucia had a vague vision of much hidden suffering, unexpectedly revealed, as she sat by his slumbers through the night. And, as she sat, through the long night, by his broken slumbers, what barrier there had been left between father and daughter sank away, out of sight.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE morning came, pellucid, in soft breaths about the brazen port-holes. Lucius opened his exhausted eyes. "Turn the ship right round," he said clearly. "Tell the captain! I don't know what the correct term is, Lucia. I never could steer"—he smiled faintly—"anybody or anything." His gaze sought hers. "Go and sleep at once," he said.

Captain Wicks felt some scorn for a man who "couldn't distinguish larboard from starboard," but more pity for "a millionaire who has fits." The owner of the *Bacchante* was a jovial Pork-lord without a conscience; and all over the ship shone and glittered his Chicago crest: a boar's head with the motto: "I can." The Captain envied not his millions but his health. Lucius Monck was the first passenger on board the *Bacchante* ever taken ill (excepting for pleasure!). Captain Wicks, bending over his collection of health-apparatus and studying "How to be energetic" felt there was a sort of divine justice in a rich man's breakdown. For the little captain was tired from morning to night, in the sea-breezes: Summers, pathetically helpful, provided him with a drink, every three hours, of "phosphorus:" you could see her pursuing him on to his ownest bridge. At first he was inquisitively grateful: then he fancied the stuff disagreed with him. No notice-board deterred her; nothing could have saved him but the mast. It was touching to watch her, when the vessel lurched. "Why don't you put her in irons?" Monck had asked. But to that the Captain had his answer ready: "She 'tends to Mrs. Lomas wonderful well." He sighed heavily: his wife at home in Brooklyn had no kind of sympathy with his physical weakness.

"When I married a sea-faring man," she always said, "I expected him to be *hale*." The word was ceaselessly on her lips. He drowned himself ultimately, killed by it.

Meanwhile the yacht was put about and skimmed blithely eastwards. What did it matter to her or to any one on board except Monck in his sudden resolve, whither she hastened? For some weeks she had moved on and turned aside, like a rowing-boat on a pond, with only compulsory stoppages for coal or provisions. Lucia and her father had not landed more than was necessary, he being unenthusiastic, she eager to explore but soon spent. Luke was wild to distribute tracts among the black men. Summers stayed scornfully on board.

There is no inanimate thing surely so entirely out of sympathy with human emotion as a ship. What cares the hard cockleshell on the water for the agony it tosses in its breast? Why have men called it 'she?' there is nothing feminine about the thing. If you claim to see living sympathy in its throbs and its groans, then what of its leaps and its bounds? The *Bacchante*, dead against the wind, rocked cheerfully upon the wavelets. Lucia, prone in her cabin, sent to ask her father if he deemed the motion pleasant.

To her alarm he appeared before her. "I bring," he said, "my own reply."

"But, father——"

"I'm all right again, or very nearly. Lucia, if this upsets you, we'll go back a bit. Otherwise—I am very anxious to get on."

"Oh, by all means let us get on."

He established himself on the couch opposite her. Summers and Luke, upheld by petroleum pills, were obviously playing deck-quoits just over their employers' heads.

"How I love you for not inquiring where I want to go in such a sudden hurry," said Monck, affectionately regarding his daughter. "I discover none of the faults in you, Lucia, which I conventionally associate with womanhood. But I admit that my theories are conventional."

And his experiences? Not for the first time Lucia found

herself wondering what his experiences might have been? "Unconventional," would have been, could he have uttered it, his reply. In truth, messed up, by the mistake of his marriage, with an incongruous consort, he had never again till now found opportunity for love of a woman worthy his heart. It was a good heart, and he had kept it, as men's hearts go, unsullied. He had always pitied Mrs. Blandrey for her error in fancying him good enough to marry: he was honestly reassured when she repaired it by espousing Number Three. "My money?" he said. "She surely might have got as much, or more, with some better fellow. Look at her first catch!" No man, not even when as humble as Lucius, even quite believes a woman takes him entirely for his money. Not though we see it done in each other's cases daily.

"Besides," said Lucius, "she can't have known what my fortune was, for I don't know, myself." "Oh, by all means let her have all she wants!" he had said, after the divorce, to Grettrix, his lawyer: of this generosity the injured wife, as we are aware, had declined to avail herself. But Mr. Monck, never having looked at an account in his life—never having asked for one—was unaware of it. Grettrix sent him as much money as he wanted—*voilà!*

And now he sat gaping fondly at Adelaide's child. The marriage which had ruined his life had been good for a good deal, after all.

"This destination," he said, "I have been turning round it all these months, like a moth round a lamp."

She waited to hear more.

"I may as well begin at the beginning. The beginning, Lucia, was an attack such as you unfortunately witnessed last night."

"You have had them before! And never told me?"

"Never?" he repeated smiling. "I have not had it during our trip. In fact I lived in the delusion, now rudely destroyed, that I was immune on the water. I had an idea, a selfish idea, that we could live on the water, growing stronger you and I! I would have done the thing a year ago, had I dared. But I didn't dare alone! No man with a brain dare live on the water

alone, Lucia, unless the brain's going wrong, like poor Maupassant!" He sighed. "St. Simon Stylites was all right on his pillar with the crowd praying all round him, but think of him—alone, dead alone, on the sea, with his thoughts, and his God!"

"It is I: be not afraid!" said Lucia softly.

"Ah, that was to a disciple!" answered Monck. "Ah, Lucia, you good women, you don't know! But it wasn't selfishness only brought you here. You needed rest as much as I."

"I have enjoyed it—I am enjoying it—as much as I ever enjoyed anything in my life," said Lucia, wondering whether she could decorously suggest a removal of the deck-quoits to some other part of the ship.

"Rest!—it is what we all seek," said Monck. Lucia agreed. "And so this attack crashed down on me last night—from nowhere!" He clenched his fist and his face grew white. "It can come here: it can come anywhere," he said. "Never, nowhere, for one moment, am I safe!"

"We must find out what brings it on," said Lucia. "Emotion——"

"Emotion?" He interrupted her with a shrill laugh. "No—tobacco. The doctors find out what you like best, and they tell you to abandon it—because they know you won't."

"But you would give up tobacco, father?"

"No: I'd sooner give up emotion. Besides, who can believe them? I've only consulted two—in London—the one said it was the nerves of the heart, and the other said it was the nerves of the breast. The one said: the Engadin and hot water. The other said: the Riviera and cold."

"Bang!" went the quoits.

"I don't like cold water, and I loathe the Engadin." He gave his little French shrug of the shoulders, which Lucia had already got to love.

"But they gave you this wonderful powder," said Lucia hopefully. "Why, it's marvelous!"

"Ah! Now, that is the beginning. They didn't give me the wonderful powder. I got that out at Tetuan, eighteen months

ago. You know about Tetuan, just beyond Tangiers? It's the one easy excursion in Morocco, perfectly safe, as a rule. But we were unlucky, stopped by marauders, probably in league with our escort: we had to give up our valuables, ten miles outside the city. It was rather dramatic, you know: blunderbusses and snap-away pistols at your forehead; and that sort of thing isn't perhaps much in my line." He laughed, a little shame-faced. "Or maybe it was the villainous native tobacco: they took away mine. I smoked quantities, to steady my nerves, and that night, in the filthy hole at Tetuan, I had my first attack. Don't you think they might stop that noise upstairs—I mean on deck?"

"By all means," said Lucia gladly.

He rang.

"The first time you think it's death," he went on. "In fact you think so each time. Well, there was a venerable old Moor merchant of our party who said it wasn't, and he gave me one of these powders, and I got well."

"How fortunate!" cried Lucia.

"He sold me six more, in this little case, at an enormous price—four hundred pounds—which I paid on our return to Tangiers. He refused to tell me anything of their origin: he couldn't give me more."

"You have only one left!" exclaimed Lucia.

"Only one now."

"But you have had them analyzed?"

"In Paris, in London, in Cairo, in Jerusalem:—they say they know, and they make up something that's no good at all."

"But the Moor—you can get at him again—we are going to Tangiers?—no, the other way!"

"I have been to Tangiers; I was going there when we met at Basle—there or Vouvray. No trace of the merchant was to be found."

"But some trace of the powders?"

"Lucia, how refreshingly quick you are!"

"Not quick, father—concerned."

"Yes, a woman thinks with her heart. But the trace is of the

vaguest. You know, how the whole East lives by Koubbas and Marabouts—holy men, alive or dead, in hermitages and tombs. Their Spurgeon, you know, and their Victor Hugo, only much more so: Eastern man especially cannot live by bread alone. Western man gets on pretty well nowadays, if the bread is sufficiently buttered. He certainly doesn't ask after the word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

"Oh, father!" She caught with sorrow the sad bitterness of his tone.

"Leave thou thy sister, when she prays,' eh? But you will not contend that there's a nation left in Christendom pretends even to practice the teaching of Christ? All the better, perhaps, the naked truth than the former falsehood. But in the East it's different. Mahomed is still a living power there. Well, I found a holy Sidi, who told me there lived a great Prophet on an island in the Ægean, and the powders were probably from him."

"You found out more?"

"No more. At least, the hermit at Tetuan—I had to go back to Tetuan, and beyond!—could do nothing for me. He gave me the name of the Teacher and of the island, and bade me go, myself."

"And so we are now going to the island! I am glad. But why didn't you go at once? And why did you speak of a moth and a candle?"

"Because there's some mystery about it. Because, like all great human remedies—for anything!—the thing has its 'con.' There was some tragedy about the sale of the powders to me. The old hermit spoke in mysteries of the issues of life—and of death!"

"But if we took precautions——"

"I don't know. He spoke as if the Moor had got a powder, which did for him. It isn't easy to take precautions, when you swallow things nobody can analyze."

"They wouldn't dare——"

"The East dares everything: it hasn't our police-ideas at all. We Westerns have a curious convention which keeps us from perpetrating a lot of feasible crimes. The East doesn't call

them crimes. Well, he made me feel creepy, a feeling I avoid."

"We will go together," said Lucia.

"And perhaps find health for you also. Last night decided me. It won't do to have one's existence hang on a single rope of—dust."

CHAPTER XXXV

IT was as if the powers of storm and darkness had set themselves against the resolve of Lucius. A grey sky swept across the vessel, that rose to meet it, and a shrieking wind built up walls of water, against which she strugglingly rose and fell. Captain Wicks climbed to the occasion, as always, braced by bad weather. He shut up "How can I become energetic?" in his locker and spent, unexhausted, his days and nights on the bridge. The graduated bottle of Sulphur-sips, which Summers had heroically prepared in the dark misery of his cabin, he spilled from the steward's hand, with bad words, on the blast.

"Did the Captain swear?" put in Luke reproachfully, listening, in the misery of *his* cabin, to the steward's gleeful account. "Oh, I'm sorry! Could you give me my note-book, John?" For Luke had a theoretically not unreasonable idea, that you dropped a bad habit, if you realized how bad it had become. Ill as he was, he managed to add another black mark to the list he was saving up as a surprise to the Captain.

"You've worse weaknesses than physical," he was going to say.

John put away the little book on the ledge against the port-hole, and somehow, when later on he was asked to "open the window," Captain Wick's iniquities slipped, forever, into the sea.

Several days later John took pity on Luke's endless searching. "It fell into the sea," he said.

Luke glanced quickly at the steward. "Ah, well: that's a symbol," he said.

"What's a symbol?" asked John.

"A sort of figure, like an instrument, to praise the Lord with. It

says we shall praise the Lord with cymbals. And I wasn't quite sure about the Captain anyway. Father allus says the saints'll praise the Lord with harping, but it won't be harping on the sinners' faults."

"I'd like to know your father: he must be a good sort," said John heartily.

Luke humbly accepted the implied condemnation of himself. The sea had gone down, and nobody could feel disagreeable after that. Lucia, her face all unwholesome colors, staggered on deck.

"I had no idea the Mediterranean could be so bad," said her father, turning to greet her. "Neither you nor I look very happy, Lucia."

"But we are happy—now," she replied, with conviction, gazing at the thin, worn-out sky, the exhaustedly panting sea. She smiled wanly. "Green pleasure," she quoted, looking at Lucius, "'and grey grief.'"

He laughed. "But I've taken my last powder," he said.

Lucia cried out. "You had another attack! Oh, you'd promised to call me!"

"Well, I didn't," he answered shortly. "It wasn't a real attack. But we're just in time, you see. Yonder's the island." He nodded to the Cape. "Captain Wicks says we can't land yet."

Captian Wicks had retired to his cabin and was desperately doing "Auto-suggestion" by the aid of a brass ball and a manual (price seven dollars the pair). During the storm he had sent seventeen personal replies to Summers, that the vessel was not going to pieces, had not sprung a leak under her cabin, or over it, was not floating keel uppermost, etcetera. He had done his duty, and more. Summers stood, a grim outline, between Lucia and a possible view of the island, and, with uplifted finger, swore, that never again, after this trip, whatever might befall her, would Annabel Summers be moved—by the sea.

"She's right, by George," said Monck. "We men are the biggest fools! Just fancy, the steward says 'I can' is a wretched sailor. As soon as there's the least bit of a swell, Luke tells me, the men call him 'I can't.'"

"Then why ever does he have a yacht?" asked Lucia innocently.

"Lucia, you *must* know, at your age! Because he bought her from Lord Hampshire, the Marquess of Hampshire. We shall have to bump about in front of this island for another twenty-four hours, the Captain thinks."

But the Mediterranean has her own opinions—at her age!—and declines to defer to a mushroom mariner who swears at her. When the trio (for Rob again realized he had four legs to stand on) came on deck after breakfast, they found the tired waves asleep and the lofty sky as full of blue patches as would clothe a boat-load of blue-jackets. "Splendid!—isn't it, Rob?" cried Lucius. Rob's mistress has never forgotten the look he cast her for only reply. Still, the cruel incrimination was somewhat mitigated by the reflection, that the bull-dog, that morning at any rate, had not again refused his breakfast.

The phantom-island had emerged from the mist, as if a veil had been unrolled from it. The *Bacchante* had crept nearer. "A boat!" said Monck tremulously, "I want to land at once. No, not you, Lucia. I want to go alone."

The little island of Scyros (or Kurosh Ibrahim) lies vaguely within sight, on an average day, of Ikteria. It rises, a green cone from the blue water, with a height of some three hundred feet and a circumference of barely four miles. Its slopes are entirely covered with olive-trees, ilex and cypress: no sign of human habitation is visible anywhere. Lucius observed this with misgiving, as his boat drew solemnly nearer, circling round in vain to the farther side. In patches—only suggestions of the hand of man—the lighter lemon trees, as the rowers veered inland, stood out against the grey-blue greenness of the woods. The sun shone, in perfect stillness, on the silence of the lonely island. The rowers dropped their oars, all eyes fixed in vain expectancy upon the changeless scene. Not a sign of life but some sea-birds, unrecognizable, over the far-away stretch of empty sea.

"If there's anybody lives there, he hasn't much of a view, sir," remarked the mate.

"We'll land on yonder bit of shingle," replied Lucius, nodding

"Yes, sir: it's the only possible place: all the rest seems sheer rock."

The boat shot forward: as it grated on the pebbles, a tall, black figure rose before it, from nowhere, a Nubian, in his beautiful native dress, blue and gold, with two silver-crusted pistols in his belt.

"No pass," he said.

Lucius advanced. "Sidi Ibrahim Abd-Er-Rachman?" he asked.

"No know," replied the Nubian.

"I have come from far—very far—to find him."

"No pass," said the Nubian.

"Does he live here—Sidi—Ibrahim—Abd—Er—Rachman?"

"No know," said the Nubian.

"Could you find out?" demanded Lucius, whose sense of humor never quite deserted him, even in the greatest perturbation. The Nubian vouchsafed no reply, but carelessly rested one hand on a pistol.

"Oh, dear no, we're not thinking of violence," said Lucius. "I wonder whether you understand that? Peace! Peace! *Salaam Aleikoum.*" To this greeting of the Faithful Only the Nubian declined to respond.

"He isn't friendly, sir, or he'd say: 'same to you,'" whispered the mate.

"It's a matter of the greatest importance: I *must* find out yes or no," answered Lucius. At the same time three other noiseless figures, with guns, became visible between the firs, six yards off.

"It looks like no," said the mate.

"No pass," said the Nubian, who had been watching the whippers with great white eyes.

Lucius turned to the Greek sailor-servant, who was their hyphen with the whole world of the Levant.

"Tell him that I have a greeting to Sidi Ibrahim from Sidi Mohammed of Tetuan. I have come all the way." The Greek's voluble outpourings met with little more reply.

"He says he doesn't understand: he doesn't know: the island is uninhabited," explained Papadouros moodily.

"Oh!" cried Lucius and the mate in a breath. The mate added: "The bloomin' liar!"

"No superfluities!" said Lucius hastily. "So there's nobody on the island of the name?" He looked at the Greek and the Nubian.

"Nobody. The island belongs to great man in Ikteria. Nobody may pass. Nobody lives on here. If people try, they get shot."

"Dear me, I didn't come here for that," said Lucius. He went and sat down, rather grey about the face, in the stern. The Nubian stood, immovable, watching the boat, as she gloomily pulled away, out of sight, round the quiet island, back to the waiting yacht.

"There is one gleam of hope," said Lucia brightly, seeing Monck's hidden despondency. "The Sidi has gone to live at Ikteria: we must go and look for him there." She hesitated a moment: it is so difficult to comfort, when we love. "Should we fail, we must go straight back to London, to the biggest men there, not rest till we find the cure."

"Do *you* believe in doctors?" He stopped scratching Rob's head: he looked round at her.

"Yes," she said bravely. "Within their human limits. They do their best. We will ask Dr. Rook's guidance—or—or young Dr. Russett's."

"Russett!—the man who cheated you out of Beechlands?"

She turned white: she turned red. She tried not to speak, or not to speak vehemently. She burst out: "If anybody has cheated, it's the father. I'm not sure about the father, but I'm sure about the son."

"The son, at his age—nearly thirty?—" "Twenty-six," put in Lucia. "Must have eyes of his own. He must have found out about his father by this time."

"Have you ever heard anything against the father?" asked Lucia quickly.

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"Against his ability never. I believe he has various sorts of abilities."

"Children are always the last to hear about their parents. Look at Mary Corry!—oh, you've never heard of Mary Corry—her father committed suicide after a horrible scandal, and I believe Mary is the only person in the world who doesn't know."

"True," he said thoughtfully, humbly. "But he hasn't got Beechlands yet: we shall make a fight for it," he added between his teeth.

The prow of the *Bacchante* was turned towards Ikteria. The white patch of houses broadened along the green line of island-coast.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THIS is Signor Salbati!" announced Captain Wicks. The personage thus presented indignantly waved the Captain aside.

"Salbati, Esquire," declaimed the new-comer, big, fat, swarthy, spreading himself, bigger and fatter, where he stood, on the sun-lit deck. "British subject," he added, haughtily eyeing Wicks half over his shoulder, "Like American subject Captain here!"

"D——d nigger!" muttered the Captain, turning on his heel and deliberately casting the ugly word into Luke's shocked face.

Absurdly, for the moustached gentleman in a panama and watch-trinkets was a Maltese, and by far the most important foreigner in Ikteria, as the insulted American citizen knew well.

"Scrumptious weather!" said the visitor, showing all his yellow teeth, "Killing, eh? After all that shindy—blow up, eh?" He noticed, having watched for it, the faint wonder in Lucia's expression. "I speak better English than you bargained—eh?" The last word recalled the realities of existence. "Where is the little Yankee?" Salbati Esquire looked round. "What does he want me to send on board?"

"We want more of you than you can perhaps provide," answered Monck.

The Maltese frowned offence. "I have everything," he said. "Ecco—a month ago an English Lord was here—the Lord Rockford—do you know what he said to me? 'Salbati Esquire, you are the Provider of the Universe! You are the White-lie,' said the Lord, 'of the Levant!'"

"Can you provide us with a Prophet—such as I don't doubt you make?" asked Lucius, nervously smiling.

Puns were not in the splendid Southerner's line: Lucius only produced them under emotional pressure.

"I—I beg you a thousand pardons?" stammered the courteous dealer.

"Captain Wicks will give you his list. I want of you a personage called Ibrahim Abd-er-Rachman."

The big windbag caved in. "Wha-wha-what? Yes, I heard what you said. But no—there is no such person in all the island."

"No, but over yonder!" ventured Lucius, nodding.

"Where?—yonder?" The Maltese cast a frightened half-glance behind his back. "I never heard of any one."

Lucius—he was not the most patient of men—looked the other in the face. "How much will you take to remember him?" he said.

"Ah yes, possibly he died, when I was a child," replied the Maltese. "It is long ago that I was a child. My father——"

"How much money must I pay to get speech with him?" interrupted Monck.

Salbati bit his lips. "Let me think," he answered. "What name did you say?"

"You heard it well enough. I have an introduction to him, by word of mouth only, from a brother saint at Tetuan. But you, I am told, are the great man here, the 'Universal Provider!'"

"Yes, but the Lord, he wanted hours—ah, the lady!—these I could provide, not saints. Could your White-lie of the West provide saints?"

"We no longer manufacture the article. If your saint is a real saint, he will receive me."

"He is a Moslem saint: he will not speak to a *giaour*."

"Ah!" said Lucius with a gasp of relief. "We have got so far. Tell me about him. I will pay more than Lord Rockford did: that is only seemly."

"Sidi Ibrahim lived yonder on the island; there is no house but his: it is hid. He is a great saint, many times a Hadj, and a Hakim. His wealth is great, from his fathers. He heals all diseases, but only of the Faithful."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Lucius, endeavoring to hide his agitation. "Money——!"

"Money is useless!" cried Salbati with scornful regret in his voice. "Sidi Ibrahim cares not for money! Greeks have sold his medicine—Turks—he has learnt it: he knows everything." His voice sank: "They are dead."

"My Moor!" exclaimed Lucius.

"I cannot procure for you his medicines," continued the Maltese with a swift glance. "If I did, they would be poisons. Hush, forget!"

"But if I were a Mussulman, he would give them to me?" said Monck, angrily walking away. He stood gaping in long silence at the dim shadow of the distant island. How long he stood there he did not know. The Maltese slunk overboard, and Lucia, with Rob on her lap, endeavored to read her novel.

Dinner was a monosyllabic meal. Once Lucius, flinging up his head, exclaimed: "And to think that I might still have had two!" He proffered no further explanation, nor did his daughter ask it.

The evening passed slowly: slowly the night brought the slowly lengthening day. The *Bacchante* lay motionless in the motionless water. All life seemed concentrated in Lucius' silent face. He sat now in one part of the ship, now in another, empty-handed, smoking. There is no cage like a ship. Nearly four and twenty hours had passed when he rose with resolve, and sought Lucia, who sat waiting to be found.

"Lucia," he broke out, "it is a matter for me of life and death. Literally. It's my only chance of living six months. What? Living a week." He held out the little empty case: the sun caught the Arabic design.

"Both London specialists were agreed in that. I made them tell me. Knowing nothing of these powders, they both said: 'You must avoid an attack at all cost. The next attack is bound to be fatal,' they said."

"Dear father, they were mistaken."

"Thanks to the powders, the powders alone!"

"We will consult a third man, a fourth, a fifth!" said Lucia tremulously, gazing up at his ravaged face.

"If I reach Marseilles alive!" he answered, "No, the old man yonder"—he pointed to the grey haze—"alone stands between me and death. Lucia, if I get an attack to-night, I shall die within sight of help!"

"Dearest father, what can we ——?"

"But I won't die!" he continued violently. "I can't. I won't. It's all very well for you, Lucia—innocent, white-souled woman like you! Do you remember about Turenne—wasn't it Turenne?—saying he was willing to confess, but he didn't know what! Ah, I've often thought of that! How differently people see things! It's not that I love life, Heaven knows! but I won't die!"

"Father," began Lucia falteringly, "if God——"

"Ah, ah, if—yes, if! See here, if God sends me this," he struck his hand on the little case, "if He sends us here, it is suicide—eh?—suicide not to use what He sends. Who tells me this man's God isn't our God? Your God isn't his? Have you ever read Lessing's story of the Rings, Lucia, which isn't Lessing's at all, but Eastern? I suppose not. Well, I'll go to this man and tell it him, if he doesn't know it. His God is my God, I shall say."

"But, evidently, father, he is fanatic; if he will never admit that our God is his God——"

"His God is my God, I shall tell him," repeated Lucius, not heeding her. "His God is my God, I shall say." He ran forward. "Ah there you are at last," he cried, as Salbati came over the side. "I have called for you to go to this Ibrahim immediately——"

"He will not receive me——"

"Or write to him or send to him—reach him somehow! Reach him with the news that I am an Englishman come here from England—that his faith is mine!"

The Maltese frowned with anxiety, cupidity, and doubt.

On the deck-table before his hesitative eyes the eager foreigner flung, drawn loosely from a trouser-pocket, a handful of clinking, glittering sovereigns, that spread themselves and lay still and

spoke. Monck glanced from the money to the Maltese, watching both.

"Make your own terms," said Monck, "so you get me into that man's presence to-night."

"It is hopeless. He will not listen. He will give you nothing if you are not of his faith," wailed Salbati.

"And why should I not be of his faith? What is his faith?" exclaimed Monck. "God is God: there is no God but one: do I doubt it? And Mohammed is His prophet—most surely, and so, by his own Mahommedan teaching, was Christ!"

The Maltese crossed himself. "I have no superstitions," he said quickly. "Yes, you are quite right. Of course—eh?"

"If he wants more of me, let him ask it. What, shall theological quibbles stand between a man and his fight for life?"

Lucia put her hand on his arm and tried to draw him gently away, but he impatiently took a step nearer.

"His religion is mine," he insisted. "Tell him that."

"What! You would——" Salbati's leer slipped back to the shiny sovereigns—"Ah, yes, I understand perfectly, perfectly: you are quite right—ah, scrumptious!" he said quickly. "Yes, yes—I understand. Ah, yes!"

"Take them," answered Monck, for it was an answer. "I don't pick up money. And you can have four times as much—to-night."

"Salbati Esquire" went over the side, muttering "Scrumptious!" and "*Ma, è possibile?*" For the next hour or two he was exceedingly busy and yet more exceedingly anxious. In rapid new-Greek he informed, as he worked, his adipose and somnolent consort, who was "Orthodox," that he loved life at her side above all things, even sterlini, but his immortal soul, unlike Englishmen, he loved still more! "But with Englishmen," he said, "see, this life is everything—I have ever observed it: they have bought *this* world: they pay the price. For the next they do not care: it is other men's. The English, therefore, unlike us, they have no religion. They are the rich, of whom the priest says that Iddio has shut them out of heaven."

"What of this Englishman?" asked Mrs. Salbati, removing from between her pearly teeth pink stickynesses of Rahat-la-Koum.

"To us he is a God-send," answered her husband, mysteriously. "What care we for his immortal soul?"

Others cared for it. Luke Willes would gladly have sacrificed his life could he thereby have transferred to his master's troubled features the calm look of his own bright face. The "valley" unconsciously felt there was trouble in the air, trouble even more than the illness which he pityingly knew to be serious. For all trouble Luke Willes had but one remedy, which his master could not or would not share. From the calendar hung hidden behind the cabin door Lucius, in his easy good-nature, daily accepted, with his shaving-water, a crumb of comfort that to the servant was indeed the very staff of life. It must be admitted that Luke, when the dates were not opposite, cheated. For Lucius was careless of dates and didn't look at calendars. This morning, for instance, after the terrible, struggling night, the young man, finding "Jesus wept," had preferred to take to-morrow's reassuring, "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

"My legs was terrible weak, sir," said Luke, as he gently moved things right.

"They're very stiff still, Luke. If they weren't stiff, I believe I should believe. But I can't understand so supreme a Maker, if He really took the thing in hand, not making a better fit. You don't mind, do you? my saying just what I think?"

"They are stiff," assented Luke. Later on he added softly: "My strength is made perfect in weakness, sir, you see."

Lucius sighed. "Would you mind dying, Luke?" he said, "if you knew you had to die, to-day?"

"It's a dreadful thing—always, sir," answered Luke quietly. "I made sure I was dying all the time I was driving with Mrs. Corry. But you see, sir, if I was to die, my legs wouldn't be stiff any more. I should fly, sir," added Luke naively.

"Yes, that's what he said, Lucia. He said he'd fly." Monck paced the deck. "Happy man to fancy he knows! Does he

think that, if he died to-night, his body would be flying about up yonder"—he pointed to the empyrean—"to-morrow?"

"He knows as much as he need know. He knows that he would be delivered from earth and earthly things. He knows that his soul would soar," said Lucia anxiously. All day her helplessness had lain like a dead weight upon her: no Tauchnitz could capture her thoughts.

"And I know nothing," said Monck, "nothing!" He walked away to the side and gazed at the sleepy little town. "Except that death may be worse than life," he murmured. "It *may* be worse. Ah, there's the rub! I wonder how much Shakespeare knew of the ills from which he didn't want to fly?"

The shadows had fallen, swift and thick: the lights shone right and left along the port, before Salbati came on board again in the soft Oriental night.

"Well?" questioned Lucius. "Well?"

"He will receive you, at once, now. Come!"

"Ah, God!" exclaimed Monck, reeling. He recovered himself. "I am ready," he said. "Let us go."

"Take me with you," said Lucia's voice in the darkness.

"Surely not. It is better——"

"Me only. I am coming," said Lucia. "I am quite rested. I have done nothing all day."

"But you——"

"Perhaps he can heal my spine, father." So saying, she went down to the waiting boat.

Salbati followed, meditating: "Is the lady also to become Moslem?" He shook his head.

As the oars splashed away through the solemn water towards the lowering phantom far ahead—the phantom that seemed to beckon and to threaten in the sunlight, and the sunfall and the darkness far ahead—as the oars splashed in the silence full of thought and fearsome wonder, Salbati, unable to listen any longer to the questionings of his own unanswered heart, Salbati spoke:

"I wrote that you accept his religion—eh?"

"I accept his religion."

The oars splashed with equal rise and fall. The darkness lay gently about them. In the lessening distance the vague island seemed to call to them. The rowers—Salbati's rowers—breathed deep.

"What are the rowers?" demanded Monck.

"Greeks," answered Salbati. He added: "Christians."

"I know," said Monck impatiently. The boat rounded to the same spot where Lucius had endeavored to land the day before. The Nubian waited with a lantern.

"There is but one carrying-chair," said Salbati. "The road is steep. They have not known of the lady."

"I can walk," replied Lucius.

But he could not. The two rowers, alternating with a couple of the Nubian's followers, made a seat of their crossed hands. For ten minutes or more the little procession, in dead silence, climbed upward and inland, along a twisting path through pine-woods, fragrant with night perfumes, soft with solitude, asleep with darkness, stirring now and again to the flutter of some timid bird or insect, like a dream.

Suddenly, in the middle of the tall trees, the road broadened to a wide open space heavy with oranges and lemons. A long, low, white wall stretched across at the farther end. "It is here," said Salbati under his breath. An iron door swung back: the bearers passed through it and through another gate in a second wall, with visions of white-clad figures opening and closing, into a large paved court, disturbed by the ripple of a fountain in the darkness, among even heavier scents of Japanese medlar and syringa and orange-blossom and that atmosphere of decay and easy-going neglect which the East retains even at night. Immediately after that came a pillared portico, a great entry and a covered inner court or hall with arches around and recesses half visible in low lamplight: the bearers set down their load. The Nubian said something in an authoritative voice. "He asks you to take off your shoes. Here are slippers," said Salbati. A double door of carved wood that must have been some twelve

feet high receded silently before them: in a sudden increase of dim half-light from many colored lanterns a large room appeared full of hidden darknesses, spread with noiseless carpets, sweet with memories of opium-fumes and century-old untroubled repose. At the farther end, to which the travelers drew lingeringly nearer, a large niche blazed into the shadows like a rising sun. Its unbearable dazzle was produced by a confusion of ten thousand crystal facets against metal reflectors: the dazed eyes turned eagerly away from it to the coolness of blue and green tessellated wall around it, and then back again, fascinated by the lighthouse brilliancy in the darkness and drawn towards the solitary figure that sat before it on a divan, with back turned to its rays.

Sidi Ibrahim Abd-Er-Rachman was a man who had long passed beyond ordinary computations of age. Eastern exaggeration ascribes his dawn to the day of Suleiman the Magnificent; it is safer to admit that he must have been at least ninety years old. His parchment skin and curved features were those of the aged intellectual Arab: a snowy beard sank over the fine linen and soft cinnamon-colored cloth of his robes. He spoke in slow Turkish and Salbati replied in that language: to neither of the speakers were the soft sounds a familiar tongue.

"Let the English approach," he said. "Bid them look into the light. And leave us alone." Salbati, translating, hesitated.

"Do everything. Do everything exactly as he says," commanded Monck. "Lucia, will you not go with the Signor?"

"Let me stay with you," pleaded Lucia. "Whatever happens, it is intensely interesting."

The interest of the following moments could only consist in ulterior conjecture. For scarcely had the doors closed upon the dependants, when darkness fell like a mantle over the eyes and brains of the two who remained, and who sank back gazing into the fierce sparkle to the last. They lost consciousness of everything but a vague feeling that their sleep was not natural sleep. And afterwards, struggle as they might, they could never recall or realize aught more than this dim consciousness that their sleep had not been a natural sleep.

The stained-glass lamps were about them again, in the dusk of shadow and color: the white figures were behind them: the Nubian stood close to Salbati. The old man sat thoughtful as though he had never stirred, but the brilliance that had framed his figure had vanished, as the glory of the sun behind some outline suddenly sinks away, dull, into a bank. Lucia put her hand to her forehead. It ached.

In the silence and the gloom that hung heavy on the unwholesome air the old man addressed the Maltese.

"Tell the Howadja," he said, carefully selecting that term, "that the Moor who sold him his powders is dead"

"I know," replied Monck, suppressing the shudder which shook his attenuated frame. "Tell him: I know."

"Tell the Howadja," continued the motionless figure in the same cold voice, "that they who sell my medicines die."

"I do not want to sell them: I want to buy," answered Lucius eagerly. "Good God, surely he knows that! Tell him I will pay—pay!"

"Tell the Howadja," replied the Saint, "that I do not give my medicines to infidels. Why should an infidel live? For what?"

"For what should he die?" answered Lucius.

"Allah knoweth," said Sidi Ibrahim.

"Tell him I am no infidel. Allah is Allah."

This thought took other shape in the Turkish of Salbati.

"Thou liest," said the Prophet, frowning, and the fat Maltese trembled in his shoes. "He willeth not to confess himself a Moslem. What?—wilt thou lie to me, who read as an open page the hearts of my fellow-men? His heart is the heart of the Christian that has outlived his faith." There was a silence.

"But this I know of him also," continued the Moslem, "that he squandered on a stranger, for love's sake, the health he had purchased at a price. And because he did this, while a son of my own faith sold what I had given him for nothing, because of this, I will bestow on him what he begs of me. Let him take it! It lies yonder"—he lifted a gaunt hand—"more than he will need before his earthly race is run. All men must die! Bismillah!

Let him take it—but tell him, that to reach it, he must trample on the symbol of his faith!”

All except the motionless native servants in the far background, who evidently understood neither Turkish nor, naturally, English, gazed in the direction of the pointing finger where the light of a lamp, somewhat clearer than the rest, showed a niche in which lay a silver-worked casket or satchel. Under the light shone in black and white marble, probably by accident, the sign of the Christian Cross.

“Take!” said the Moslem.

Gladly would Salbati have left the chief part of his message unspoken, but not for the life of him, not for all the sterlini on board the *Bacchante*, would he venture to thwart further in any way the divine will of the Arab seer. And, indeed, from the very first he had moved in abject terror of approaching catastrophe. Farreaching in all the islands and inland provinces of the Levant was the Arab's reputation for unearthly power, for knowledge of things that are hid. To the Maltese, as to all men of his kind, a natural force he could not fathom was fathomless. The super-psychic can achieve all things, being devil or God.

“Take!” repeated the Moslem.

In the intentionally careless gesture the whole horror of the sudden decision seemed to stand revealed.

“It is foolishness,” prompted the smooth Southerner softly. “What matters the thing? See, it is not a real cross, but a shape—eh?”

“Lucia! Lucia!”

“Let him take!” said Sidi Ibrahim.

“Lucia! It is only a design in the pavement. If you come to think of it, the idea is absurd.”

Monck, looking up, saw the gaze of the Nubian fixed on his face.

“You!” exclaimed Monck, turning on Salbati, “you have never felt the grip at your heart! It is vain to talk of it to others. None who has not felt it can conceive a death-agony that doesn't die!”

"But go—fetch the packet—let us be gone!" said the Maltese. Monck's gaze sought Lucia's: she sat averted; trembling, he thought. He looked quickly away, and his glance, as it shot past the Nubian, caught something that he deemed was a smile in the slave's unmoving eyes.

"No, by Heaven!" cried Monck, rising. "It is nothing, as you say, but he's made it something. Not even to save my life will I do a thing like that with these creatures looking on!" He faced the watchful old man on the tall cushions. "No!" he said. "Do you understand that?"

Lucia sank forward in silence, her face in her hands.

"Let us go: I have done what I could," exclaimed Salbati.

"Behold, she prayeth!" said the Mohammedan, and, for the first time, he meditatively stroked his long beard. "The God of the Christians is not Allah! nay, by Allah! But the praying of man or woman is prayer!" He paused, and then, speaking with thoughtful hesitation: "Tell her," he said, "that her sickness is not unto death. Bid her go in peace. From the pain she endures, uncomplaining, in secrecy, the All-merciful, in the hour of her self-sacrifice, by her sacrifice, will deliver her. To his children the All-powerful gives the strength which they ask."

"But my father!" cried Lucia.

"Her father? His life is his: his death is his: what does it matter? See, for her sake I will grant him this one thing!" He pointed in the opposite direction where also, at the farther end, hung a white lamp before a niche. "Yonder, side by side, lie two packets: let him take which he will."

"They contain this drug which he asks!" cried Salbati.

"One is life: one is death: let him take which he will."

"But direct me which is which, oh great Teacher! That I help him——"

The old man clapped his hands. "Let him choose, if he will. It is ended. Give money neither to me nor my servants. God is God, and His Faithful are His Faithful! And the ways of the Infidels are as emptiness. Farewell!"

The Nubian, ever attentive to his master's nod, had brought the two brodered satchels on a salver. The great doors fell apart. The soundless servitors closed in like a soft white cloud against the stranger: the couch and its occupant sank away from view. The Nubian, waiting by the threshold, slowly drew back his tray. Lucius, with a cry crushed deep down in his bosom, snatched at one of the packets. The doors swung to: the visitors again stood in the darkness of the covered court.

CHAPTER XXXVII

“CAPTAIN WICKS, we start to-morrow for Marseilles,” said Lucius, as he came aboard.

“Yes, sir. I’m sorry it’s Marseilles.”

To this tribute—for the Captain knew Marseilles was the end of the cruise—Lucius made no reply. He locked himself up in his cabin. And there he threw down the little packet he had gained with such effort, and gazed at it moodily.

His was a hard case, he thought, but the thought is not original. His life for some fifty years had been smooth and harmless, cultured, a little disconcerted as time went on. He had always been generous, good-natured, interested in a thing or two that few people care about, the continental work of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and one or two other non-sectarian, unprominent charities, and also old pewter and ceramics. His book about “Mexican Pottery Before and After the Conquest” is still far and away the best on the subject; it cost him more than a thousand pounds to produce. Of course he had acted very wrongly about Mrs. Blandrey, but—dear me!—what can a man do when his wife responds to not a single call of his inner nature?—and he certainly had not injured in any manner the flirty cause of Mrs. Blandrey’s jealousy, a fashionable widow who had forgotten him sooner than he had forgotten her. Delicate, neurasthenic, never feeling well and pretending not to notice, he had been completely surprised by the first attack at Tetuan: he had, however, ascribed it to the very unusual excitement of the day: the ready powder had supplied him with an immediate remedy: he had expected to find in London an easy and permanent cure. The discovery was certainly disconcerting

that Western science, for his complaint, had nothing but talk. He still, however, possessed his drug, and for more than a year he remained without further use for it. A second attack in the foregoing summer and the resultant grim diagnosis with the usual glib addition that "years might ensue, etc.," had sent him south relying for a long future on the four powders, two of which he had so generously squandered on the German. The other day, on the yacht, suddenly again stricken down after so long a respite, he had realized the whole horror of his situation—unless he should obtain a fresh supply of this remedy in which he had learnt to find certain, if temporary, relief. He had never quite doubted that he would obtain it. Money, in his existence, had done so much, through his very carelessness of money. And now, with the prospect before his eyes of the terrible agony which his illness entails—perhaps the worst thinkable because of its continuous ambushed threat—he held in his failing hands a possible long salvation, a possible immediate death. He laughed aloud—that such a dilemma should fall, suddenly, out of the blue sky, on a man who, all his life long, had avoided dilemmas.

He bent, unwontedly, to pick up a white paper off the floor, for he fancied it had dropped from the little silver-worked case. But no, it was only a leaflet of Luke's calendar, the scrap for the day—he held it between two fingers. What had Luke read out that morning?

"Jesus wept."

Luke had read out something else: no matter. Monck threw himself on his berth. He had never been a student of Scripture, and the connection of the words was unknown to him. Various poets were more familiar to him, Shakespeare for instance: that evening, at the most critical moment, a well-used quotation had stood out in his mind, the cry:

"Oh, Isabel!
Death is a fearful thing."

And the response:

"And shamed life a hateful."

"Isabel!"—"Measure for Measure," of course. He got up again to seek his pocket-companion and see where the lines fitted in. There was more there on the subject, he remembered——

Indeed, there was more than he had wished to find.

"—— 'Tis too horrible!

The weariest, and most loathed worldly life,
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death."

He flung himself back on the bed, recalling the character of Claudio. Well, well, the non-fear of death is largely a lack of imagination. We moderns speak of life and its close as Claudio or, if more philosophic, as Hamlet, though Christ died two thousand years ago with Paradise on his lips. No wonder He wept. He might weep for such as I am, thought Lucius. And he was content, in his gentlemanly despondency, that he had refused, when the moment arose in his mild existence, to buy life by insulting one who, in dying, had wept for him. "Claudio would have done it," he reflected. "What cads we are!" He felt as if he could have wept himself, at thought of this crazy, creaky plank of life to which we cling so frantically, with the inevitable abyss of death below.

But next to Claudio stood Isabel, and Isabel suggested Lucia. That evening her father had first heard, from Sidi Ibrahim's lips, of Lucia's unspoken pangs. "Ah, men suffer," said Monck, "I suppose they can even suffer in silence. But they can't suffer, uncomplaining. Only a woman can do that."

Next morning he reproached her a little for not crying out when hurt. She laughed it off. "Besides, I *do*," she said, "you can't think how angry I am about this new bother that has come into my life. Ask Summers! Or Sister Hilda, who used to say: 'Look at *me*: I feel weaker than you do!'"

"One thing I want of the gods," said Lucius, "that, whether I live or whether I die, I may be spared a professional nurse!"

"And there's one thing I thank God for," answered Lucia tremulously, "and that is that Henry, in his brief illness, had

such perfect nursing. Ah, what nursing that was, father! There never was such nursing as Dr. Russett's."

"Doctors are very bad nurses as a rule," said Lucius shortly. "Nobody else puts on a bandage quite as badly as a doctor."

Lucia shook her finger at him. "Now, how do you know so much?" she laughed.

"I've been mixed up with a lot of sickness—two cottage hospitals, for instance. I've never looked out for it, and never avoided it, if it came my way."

"I have," said Lucia gravely. "I fear I used to send jelly and ask Dr. Rook to let me know when the people were convalescent. They were quite as cross when they were convalescent, I fancy."

"Crosser. There is Salbati Esquire come to say good-bye."

The Maltese bowed with the tragedy air that had settled on him last night, the moment his negotiations failed. "Ah, the Mohammedan, he is not the Christian!" said Salbati. "The Christian, he is all love, love-sweet! The Mohammedan, he is cut you dead!"

"You have my address in London," answered Monck. "If you can get at the truth about these drugs, be sure you will be handsomely rewarded. But what is the truth with a man like that? Who shall say? His most solemn asseveration may be a lie."

"Ah, true, true!" cried Salbati Esquire, delighted with a new long word for a falsehood. "The Mussulman's talk it is nothing but asseverations all day!" He disappeared into his boat, his fat eyes beaming. He still prospers, in white and blue Ikteria, the "White-lie" (as remarked by Lord Hampshire) and "Universal Provider of the Levant," or, more correctly, of the Ægean, as long as Rhodo-popoulos flourishes at Smyrna. To the only other man at Ikteria who understands sufficient English, he—Salbati Esquire—frequently quotes Lucius. "How true said the pale Englishman with the bad pain in him: The word of the Moslem, it is an asseveration." It has got to be "acceleration" by this time.

The *Bacchante*, with fair breezes behind her, flew lightly to Marseilles. Captain Wicks, excessively depressed, tightened his electric belt (quite devoid of electricity) till he was green in the face: Luke and Summers openly expressed their satisfaction, for Luke had blue-ribboned only one sailor and *he* had lapsed, while Summers, in the trances of the tempest, had scattered her petroleum pills, furious at their inefficacy, and now, maid-like, reproached Lucia (who had remarked that they seemed inefficacious) with their loss.

"Well, well, we shall get in to-morrow," said Lucia, "and after that you need never again brave the elements."

"I hhoped we were going hhome, ma'am?" replied Summers who often showed in conversation, that she remembered her "h's."

"So we are. Oh, yes, I forgot the Channel. Yes, I am anxious to get back to England and never to leave it again."

"Plans? Now there are the two of us, I feel that I must make them," said Lucius, as Summers went off to inform "the valley" that her mistress called being sea-sick "braving the elephants." "Your mother, Lucia—excuse me just once—used always to arrange schemes, you know, and map out her existence—with signal success, I allow—but I couldn't. I call it making puddings—with a difference. You laboriously collect all your ingredients, and then—fate blows out the kitchen-fire!"

"But if you didn't *try* to bake your puddings," suggested Lucia, "you'd always be eating hap-hazard meals?"

"What more delightful than to live *al-fresco*? However, I'm going to be sensible now and settle down by my own hearth and take delightful care of you."

"The first thing we must do is to go to London," said Lucia, "and get hold of the biggest chemist alive."

"And see Grettrix: I haven't seen Grettrix for years. As I told you, I shall make a fight for Beechlands. Oh, yes, ultimately we shall live at Beechlands. I am quite anxious to see the house."

"Don't, father! Because, you know, I've been thinking that

perhaps the great renunciation for me, which that man spoke of, is to—to give up Beechlands. Not, certainly, to fight for it. You see, I consented: I sold it—it wouldn't be fair."

"Lucia, you mustn't excite me!"—Ah, what a weapon he had there!—"Were you in a condition to sell that night? What do women know of business?"

Lucia looked round and smiled at him: he could not but smile back. "But I'm going in for business now," he said. "It's quite different, when there are two of you. I shall write to Grettrix from the Hotel de Noailles and ask him for his accounts. It'll be the first business letter I've written for more years than I care to remember."—His last business letters, indeed, had been written, with loathing, in the days of his divorce.—"Then we will settle down in some first-rate London apartments that I have my eye on, whilst you consult a good specialist, and I get at the law about Beechlands."

"And where does my self-sacrifice come in?" asked Lucia.

"Oh, I'll see to that. I've always had my own way, and I insist on having it with you. And, besides, you'll keep Summers."

"Why, Summers is perfection! Oh, you mean her cross face. All really good servants have cross faces. Henry used to say ability and self-esteem made the best mixture for a maid. But I don't want a new specialist. How difficult it is to get away from doctors, once you're mixed up with them. But I'm going to—I'm going to—stop specialists."

"How are you going to manage?" he questioned eagerly.

"Look at Luke Willes hopping about over yonder! We can't all get cured like that: I suppose we aren't worthy. I had hoped to, but it isn't to be. Well, some of us get our cross taken from us, and some have to go on carrying it, but none of us need spend our lives rushing right and left in futile attempts to get rid of it. I've had a long, quiet time for thinking on this yacht, and I've thought it all out. Do you know it happens to be just eight months since I was suddenly flung into this hocus-pocus of doctors? See, what it's brought me to, step by step!" Her lip trembled. "Or rather, don't let's think of it!" Her eyes dropped to her

crape-gown: she fondled the dog at her feet. Lucius was silent, at a loss for a subject.

She looked up. "But I mustn't be unjust," she said, "mother says it's all my fault for being fussy. People *are* fussy. Mother is wonderfully brave. I never heard her complain in my life."

"She probably never had an ache to complain of."

"So she says, but that is just her bravery. Now I, when I am wretched, I can't help feeling wretched. And, then, mother is very careful."

It cost him an effort not to say: "Witness her flight from Mentonel" but, true to an early resolve, he made flattering answer: "She has always been a wonderful woman: I am glad you appreciate her, Lucia."

"Why, she's mother!" said Lucia. "Of course I love her. And now I've got two parents to—appreciate instead of one. Captain Wicks!" She leaped away from sentiment, as he would have done—"What is that steamer over yonder?"

"She's a 'Transatlantic' from Algiers, ma'am, which sounds odd, considering Algiers is just over the way. I wish *we* was Transatlantic, just starting to show you the States."

"Captain Wicks is the most soft-hearted of seamen," said Lucia, "no wonder he isn't well. I've promised to send him the latest form of vibrator from London, one that vibrates *inside* you. I asked him what he'd like for a souvenir, and he said *that*."

The soft-heartedness of Captain Wicks found sufficient utterance at the gangway in parting. He awkwardly presented Lucia with the dearest treasure (exclusive of medicine-machines) that he possessed. It was a rough sketch, by a great caricaturist of our day, too early deceased, of the Pork-lord and the artist at a slanting breakfast-table, with "I can" under the artist and under the Pork-lord "I can't." "It'll be something to remember the *Bacchante* by," said the Captain, insisting, hurt. "Don't forget, if I may be so bold, about the Vibrifex. And I do wish you'd try one yourself, ma'am: 'Health for the Home' says it does wonders for delicate women—I beg your pardon,

I mean 'ladies!'" With scarlet apology the Captain added over the gangway: "I was *quoting*." Lucia, from the sun and smell-filled quay, nodded a friendly farewell. It was a strange experience after the long, fresh silence of the sea-trip, the dirty, noisy, red-hot tumult of Marseilles.

At the hotel lay a packet of letters and newspapers, so large that the dignified *concierge* presented it with a smile. But Lucius received it, amid the clatter and clang of wind-blown arrival in this blowiest, noisiest city of Europe, with a sigh. Next to writing letters, Lucius of course objected to receiving them: kith and kin alone make letters desirable, and Aunt Ermentrude always asked for money—which she got. There was an epistle from her now, a long one, full of her remarkable studies in the physiology of the vegetable world: Lucius carelessly perused it, waiting for the inevitable appeal to his love of science or of the aged poor or eruptive babies or some other thing that he didn't love in the least.

"Your Aunt Ermentrude says we must just come to her: so we can for a week, while I—— Good heavens, what's the matter? You can't have bad news, Lucia!—from, whom?"

His daughter held out to him the telegram she had just opened.

Come to me at once. I have only a few weeks to live.—MOTHER.

Father and daughter gazed at each other, speechless. Then Lucia scattered the newspapers and envelopes over the table, looking for something more. Under her father's fat *Spectators* and *Athenæums* she unearthed half a dozen blue missives: one by one she opened them, higgledy piggledy, with steadying fingers and insistent eyes.

The message of the whole mass, in its chronological disorder, was the same. "Come to me! Come! Come at once! I have only a few weeks to live."

Lucius silently arranged the dates, and, smoothing the papers out in a little pile: "The oldest is only a week old," he said.

"I am so glad of that: I had written that we should be calling in here."

"The two last are from Geneva," continued Monck. "Why should she— isn't there a letter?"

"No," replied Lucia, sorting her unopened envelopes.

"She must have gone to Geneva on her way to Ouchy," continued Lucia. "She likes a month there or at Vevey when returning from the Riviera."

"Very sensible, but she could just as well have written a few facts," protested Monck irritably. Even while he spoke, a page-boy handed Lucia another telegram. She tore it open, for every fresh word under such circumstances is weighted with possible catastrophe. This one only insisted:

If in time, join me here to-morrow. Cannot write.

"I must start tonight," said Lucia.

"There is a train straight through," he answered unwillingly.

"Yes, I must start to-night. Poor mother!" She looked him in the face. "Honestly," she said, "and I do hope you won't think me unfeeling, I have an idea things may not be quite as bad as she fears. A year ago I should have believed absolutely what the doctor has told her. Now I say: he may be wrong."

"Certainly. Therefore——" A light came into his eyes.

"And he may be right," said Lucia quickly. "In any case I must go to her at once. I am quite fit to be with her. This long rest on the yacht has made a different creature of me. I feel quite strong."

"I will take you," he said, rising already. Her gaze was still fixed on his face.

"Oh, not further than the Geneva station," he said sadly.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WHEN, thirty hours later, Lucia entered the hôtel room at Geneva, Mrs. Blandrey flung herself impetuously into her daughter's arms.

"Oh, thank Heaven, you are come!" said Mrs. Blandrey. "Oh, thank heaven! Oh, thank heaven!" She thanked heaven so convincingly, that Lucia, never cock-sure of celestial approval, gathered confidence to say (inwardly) "Amen!"

The tired daughter hastily examined the mother, whose appearance expressed not so much suffering as worry.

"Oh, why didn't you come sooner!" exclaimed Mrs. Blandrey. "Oh, Lucia, how well you look!"

Lucia explained, but her mother, hardly listening, declared that nowadays messages could be telegraphed, as every one is aware, to ships out at sea. "And I specially told the man to marconigraph them on to you, if you weren't at the hotel," she said. She moved to the bell. "I must find out at once why that wasn't done," she said.

"Oh, not now!" cried Lucia. "Tell me first! Tell me what has happened! I know nothing."

"Bad news will wait, Lucia," said Mrs. Blandrey. "It did seem extraordinary to me that my daughter should keep silence at such a crisis, I must say that. Yes, daily, hourly I expected a word of responsive sympathy. Oh, it's so cruel to have to wait for a little sympathy, when you're all alone in the world!" Mrs. Blandrey put her hand to her forehead and lay down on the sofa. "All alone," she said, shuddering, "with such a trouble as mine!"

"But tell me—tell!" cried Lucia.

"Don't be so violent; you will know soon enough. Too soon!

You had better lie down, first, Lucia, and have some tea. Then, when you are rested from your journey, we can have a quiet talk."

"You are ill—very ill?"

"Ill?" echoed Mrs. Blandrey, with a hysterical laugh. "Dying—do you call that ill enough? It is not to be the altar for me, Lucia, but the tomb!"

Suddenly she flung her face back into the sofa-cushions and burst into an agony of weeping. Lucia had never seen any one weep so vehemently before, had never seen her mother weep at all. Instinctively she felt that, whilst her father preferred silent compassion, endearments would be more appropriate here. Presumably she was right, for the more she fondled the prostrate figure, the more the poor lady cried. When the paroxysm was over and the weeper lay hushed on the sofa, Mrs. Blandrey found strength to say, with frequent punctuation:

"Real disease is such a different thing from feeling unwell, Lucia. Not that I ever felt unwell before, not to speak of. I had my little ailments, like other people, but I never counted them. And besides, it's not feeling unwell that makes you ill, but being ill, however you feel."

Lucia understood that every word of this was retrospectively hortatory, none more so than the final apophthegm.

"I don't feel unwell in the least," sobbed Mrs. Blandrey, "and—and——" Suddenly she grew quite distinct: "People who cry 'wolf' themselves, never believe there's any wolf," she said. "I'm not alluding to you," she added, hastily penitent. "I was thinking of your poor papa"—she referred to "Number Three"—"who always got into such a state about every pain in his little finger! He set you a bad example; I used often to tell him so."

"He wasn't strong," said Lucia, surprised to find herself unreasonably resenting the prescriptive "papa."

"And I haven't even a pain in my little finger!" cried Mrs. Blandrey tearfully. "I have nothing—nothing, Lucia, but a little swelling *here*"—she touched her breast—"and it means—oh, I can't say again what it means!"

"Dearest, darling mother," stammered Lucia. "Don't—don't say anything you don't want to say. Only tell me—tell me, if you can—what I want to know so much! The doctor——"

"Lucia, you look tired, child: you ought to have some tea. Ring for it."

Lucia, exhausted by her long railway shaking, dragged herself to the bell. Nothing, even after her recovery, wore her out like railway travel, but never a doctor in the universe yet took the faintest account of that! No one, however long confined to one chamber, is too ill to be transported, when the time comes, in any weather, wherever a doctor may prefer him to be.

"I was quite well and happy at Monte Carlo," continued Mrs. Blandrey plaintively, "when I noticed this little blemish one evening, and I showed it to Annette, who said she had seen it the day before. I can't understand, Lucia, that I hadn't seen it the day before?" Mrs. Blandrey looked the protest she felt. "I have always been so careful about my body—my dear body, as you know I call it—and now there is that terrible little swelling, and nobody can tell how it has come."

"But it can be removed!" cried Lucia.

"Oh, Lucia, how horrible you are! I asked a doctor on the Riviera, of course, at once, and he said I must have further advice in Paris! But I wouldn't go to Paris—not after all Dieudonné has told me about Paris doctors—not for my life! There was a little niece of his they put into plaster, and she used to lie screaming so, her nurse beat her till they found the leg had mortified and they had to amputate. And a young Countess de Viroflay, that they operated on—quite a slight operation—but nobody noticed she was sickening of scarlatina, and the bags of ice gave her a chill and she died. Dieudonné is rather mad about doctors, because, you see, he believes in Lourdes only, and miracles. He lent me, when Henry was ill, Daudet's 'Morticoles' and that frightful 'Nos Chers Docteurs.' He maintains that they always operate on people who can pay. Or who can half pay. There are more people ruined nowadays by doctors than by bankers, he says."

"Yes," said Lucia softly.

"But of course he exaggerates. He keeps himself well—and he is a wonderfully young-looking man—by wearing a little bag, out of a convent, with herbs in it, and the Madonna outside. Not that I've seen it," added Mrs. Blandrey hastily. "But he always had cramps before."

"Is it the herbs—think you?—or the Madonna?" asked Lucia.

"I don't know. I don't think profanity is ever nice, Lucia, Especially not in a woman."

"I did not intend to be profane, dear. But I was wondering whether you could try the herbs?"

"Ah, Lucia, how one can see that you have been accustomed to little shilly-shally, make-believe complaints! Amulets and charms and sanatoriums are all very well for *those*. You see what Vouvray did for Henry, who was really ill! Oh, I don't say you were to blame. He couldn't have lived in any case, poor fellow, no more than——" her voice faltered. "There must be no nonsense in my case: I shall see to that."

"But what are you going to do? I have come. I am eager to help you. Why are you here? Are you going to Vevey?"

"Vevey, no indeed! Vevey would be *pleasure*! All that is miles away. I can't realize that, a fortnight ago, I was myself. Ah, Lucia, it's no use our talking. We don't speak the same language. I'm not the same person you knew. No one who has not passed through my experience can have the faintest conception what it means." She buried her face in her hands: almost immediately she drew it out again and stared wildly at her daughter.

"I have kept all this from the Count de la Rocheffeuilletas," she said. "My one care was to preserve my secret out there. I said I wanted change of air. I telegraphed to you—in vain!—and I fled."

"But why here?"

"Let me speak! Annette, the maid I took at the hotel, is from Geneva, and she knows of a doctor who cured a case just like mine."

"Cured!" Lucia, overwrought, also found herself crying, softly.

"Cured. She gave me the full particulars. She is an exceedingly clever girl, not like our stupid, heavy English maids—not like Summers. So modest! She begins every sentence with 'If madame will allow me!' Fancy Summers asking us to allow her! That woman has a superior manner of seeming to laugh at you behind her stolid countenance which simply drove me wild. It would be impossible to think of poor little Annette as laughing at any one!"

"And you have consulted this doctor?"

"I am expecting him. I hadn't really the courage, before you came! I felt so lonely, and—and so afraid. But as soon as I had your telegram, I made an appointment. Now, *do* go and lie down, Lucia—you tire me, dear—and be back at half-past four."

Lucia, obedient, was ready to await le docteur Jalappe. Mrs. Blandrey had developed, in this last fortnight, a novel nervousness. It was true, as she said herself, that she had greatly changed. She got up and sat down and "restlessed" (to use her own former complaint against Lucia's) about the ugly hotel sitting-room. Steps were heard on the landing. She turned white and red. Annette announced "Monsieur le docteur!" "Does madame wish me to return?"

"Yes, undoubtedly." Lucia thought the new *jemme de chambre* looked ironically modest, politely pert.

Monsieur le docteur Jules Jalappe proved a surprisingly youthful personage, barely thirty, with nothing in his quiet appearance to distinguish him from hundreds of his pale-faced, dark-eyed fellow-citizens. "He might be a shop-keeper or a tram-conductor," thought Lucia, "but the Swiss haven't our social refinements;" the doctor understood a little English. "*Mais ces dames parlent si bien le français!*" The astonishing, and astonished, maid winked, with downcast glance—just the slightest little quiver in the direction of Monsieur le Docteur.

"Aha, yes!" said Monsieur Jalappe in English. He seemed

a diffident young man, ill at ease with these stylish ladies. "*Mais, Annette, c'est des femmes très 'chic,'*" he had declared in a hurried aside to the maid on the landing. "*Hardi, mon vieux!*" had been her swift, *sotto voce* reply.

"We must examine! We must examine!" said Monsieur Jalappe in his own tongue, promenading about the room and rubbing his hands. "I have healed many—ah, many—that were doubtless worse than you, madame. It is a good thing you have come to Geneva! Geneva is the real city of light, not Paris—she is the city of lightness. Our faculty of medicine, she is the best in the world. In the French world," he added, as a courteous after-thought.

Annette, unhooking behind her mistress's back, tried to frown at him. "But he is ever that voluble, he will not heed!" thought Annette.

The patient, appealing to her daughter, submitted to the ordeal of examination, in an agony of suspense broken by sighs, outcries and groans. Annette handed smelling-salts. "Lucia! Ah, Lucia! Lucia!" cried Mrs. Blandrey.

"*C'est le nom de madame?* C'est un joli nom," said the doctor. But otherwise his behavior was exceedingly decorous. Lucia, through intuitions known only to womanhood, wrote him down quite an odious person on that tablet of her mind which is marked "Uncharitable," and which she ever keeps strictly to herself. His keen face, however, was undoubtedly intelligent, as he bent it over the prostrate form.

At last he sat back and bowed low.

"Well?" gasped Mrs. Blandrey. "Well? Well?"

"Calm yourself, dear madame. There is no cause for agitation!"

"*Pouvez-vous me—* Oh, Lucia, what is the French for 'cure?'—my poor head turns round!"

"*Guérir?*" cried, together, Lucia and Annette.

Le docteur Jalappe slowly drew an enormous black note-book out of his pocket—at sight of which Annette's black eyes danced delightedly—and solemnly loosening the elastic:

"There is nothing very serious the matter," he said.

"Nothing very serious—oh?"

Mrs. Blandrey accents wavered between doubt and hope. Annette vainly tried to nod to *le docteur*, but already he had corrected his mistake:

"Nothing permanently serious, I should say. You will have to be very careful and do exactly what I recommend, and you will recover."

"You can promise me that?"

"But yes—I can promise."

Before anybody—before she herself—had realized what was going to happen, Mrs. Blandrey had leaped from the sofa and thrown her arms around Annette's neck.

"Oh, you dear girl! You dear girl!" she cried, kissing her. "I owe my life to you. The Nice doctor said I should die!"

"Ah!" exclaimed *le docteur Jalappe*.

"Oh, he didn't say when," replied Mrs. Blandrey. She added tremulously: "But I saw in his face he thought soon."

"You will live to be old, and that is a long way off," said the doctor gallantly. "Meanwhile, one thing is certain: the air of Geneva, of Switzerland, is very bad for your complaint. Every day that you remain here is injurious."

"We will leave tomorrow," said Mrs. Blandrey.

"But how about your treatment?" put in Lucia.

"I will write it out for you"—he tapped his pocket-book—"and send it to-night. It is quite simple, and it need not be followed here."

"Ah, doctor!" exclaimed Mrs. Blandrey, catching hold of the man's hands—her eyes were streaming—"Ah, what do I not owe you?"

"Forty francs," said *le docteur Jalappe*, with a glance at Annette.

"Oh, what is forty francs? I see in your eyes that you understand my case? You are sure you will cure me?"

"But, madame, ask Mademoiselle Bernelas"—a bow to Annette.—"Have I not cured her aunt, that was much worse? And her sister-in-law? And her uncle's grand-father? And the charwoman who lives on the other side of the street?"

"Yes, yes," assented the maid quickly; "but madame is tired: madame is exhausted——"

"I am not tired a bit, Annette," protested the invalid sharply. "Lucia, I should like to ask this most charming gentleman to dine with us. Can you not manage, monsieur? We should be delighted. I have been—oh, so dull!"

"*Le docteur* is so occupied," interposed the maid. Lucia stared in amazement at the impudence of the girl.

"Not too occupied," purred Monsieur Jalappe.

"And madame"—a wave of the hand towards Lucia—"is half-dead after her long journey——"

A haughty pride rose up from somewhere in Lucia's gorge, and she untruthfully answered—thus our failings hang together: "I am not half-dead: I thank you." Perhaps not untruthfully: half-dead is not such a difficult state to analyze.

Thus it was settled that the doctor should return to dine. He seemed inordinately elated at the prospect, even though Annette hung over the banisters to hiss after him: "*Tu ne te souleras pas, tu sais!*"

He certainly had no such intention, when he appeared at the door of the private sitting-room in his badly fitting dress clothes.

"How?" cried Annette, taking his coat.

"Hired."

"Thou art a fool; thou wilt give the whole thing away."

He smiled disdainfully as he entered. The ladies were *épantées*, and he told them so, but that was later on, when he had asked Mrs. Blandrey for a third bottle of champagne.

"I have paid part of my debt to my maid," said Mrs. Blandrey graciously, as they sat down. She looked blooming, frizzed, inexpressibly happy.

"Pay it all, madame, pay it all; she is a good girl," said *le docteur* loudly. Annette just heard this, as she, giggling a little anxiously, withdrew. She peered a great deal through the keyhole, but then that is, perhaps, if they claim it, a privilege of maids.

She could see Monsieur Jalappe behaving quite nicely. If

he used his knife too much—for instance, carving his sole!—and held his fork too low—well! He talked brightly; he amused the ladies, especially *ma vieille*, for the latter laughed a great deal, laughed hilariously. “The daughter would not be my style,” decided Annette.

The daughter looked grave, as dinner proceeded, especially when the doctor’s stories grew so very funny, and Mrs. Blandrey laughed so very loud.

“My dear Lucia,” said the elder lady in an English aside, “these foreign doctors all have a foreign idea of what is proper. Be sensible and laugh.”

“I thought I was laughing!” replied Lucia innocently. “*Oh oui, docteur, oui, très drôle!*”

“*Tray drôal, n’est-ce pas!*” he cried, imitating her accent. He filled Mrs. Blandrey’s glass, spilling a little. “Champagne is good for you,” he said; “champagne is good for everybody!”

“Oh, no, thank you, no more!” interposed Lucia, her hand on her little goblet. He poured some of the wine over her hand in his precipitation, and, reddening, he repeated a joke or two that must have come out of one of those painted half-penny horrors the French police will forbid some day. He roared over them; Mrs. Blandrey blushed under Dupajoux’s enamel. It was distressing to the good-natured young doctor that the “lovely widow” did not seem to catch the meaning. He explained laboriously—she wriggled and twisted, like a worm on a hook. “Geneva seems a beautiful city,” she said. “The Rhone——”

“*Vous êtes beaucoup trop jolie pour être veuve,*” he interrupted her. It was about this time that he asked for a third bottle, and upset it, catching it up quickly again, with a spout over Mrs. Blandrey, and stammering that the ladies were *épatantes*, and as for him, “when a woman was lovely”—with a kiss of the fingertips to Mrs. Lomas—“he loved—loved——”

Lucia rose. “Mamma, don’t you think we had better leave the doctor to his wine?”

“Lucia,—my treatment!”

“To tell her so,” finished the doctor with a hiccough. Then

suddenly he burst into shouts of laughter. "*Ah, la bonne blague!*" he yelled. "*Ah, la bonne blague!*"

Both ladies now gazed at him, horror-struck. They were even relieved that the bedroom door above should burst open, and Annette come running in.

"*Ah, le pauvre docteur!*" screamed Annette. "It is his attack of the nerves! He has it often. From excess of mental strain—it is in the family. His grandmother—nay, then, come with me, *docteur*, to the lavatory! But yes, madam, I know exactly—he has had it at our house."

"But my treatment!" exclaimed Mrs. Blandrey in despair.

Monsieur Jalappe had been somewhat sobered by the vivacious entry of the soubrette. He paused in his half-unwilling progress to the door, and solemnly attempted to hand over an envelope he had drawn from his pocket. Annette snatched at it, but with an idiotic laugh he flung it on to the disordered table. It splashed into a dish of strawberry cream; Mrs. Blandrey fished it out.

"*Ça y est!*" announced Annette with decision, and flung her charge and herself through the door with a bang. The two ladies looked at each other. In silence Mrs. Blandrey opened the sloppy, pink envelope, but not in silence did she read:

"Go home and get your doctor to attend to you.—JALAPPE."

"Lucia!"—that was her one appeal now in all her trouble, to the daughter whom she had felt to be stronger, in psychic strength than herself. Intellectually, she still considered her own powers much superior. "I know about *life*, no one better," she said.

"Let us see whether we can inquire of the proprietor," replied Lucia.

"About what?" asked Mrs. Blandrey amazed.

"This so-called doctor," said Lucia firmly. Her mother did not take kindly to so extravagant a suspicion, not even when Lucia had sent for the address-book, and discovered various Jalappes in humbler walks of life, a hair-dresser, a school-teacher, a chemist's assistant, but no Jules.

"Annette knew all about him," said Mrs. Blandrey incisively. "She is—was—seemed a most respectable girl."

The proprietor, or manager, when he found time to take pity on their growing uncertainty, knew one thing, in common with Annette: namely, that Geneva possessed no doctor of the name of Jalappe! He could hardly keep serious. But, the first joke digested, as it were, he proposed the police. The police?—no, indeed, why? Mrs. Blandrey, trembling with eschewed anxiety, rang a third time in vain inquiry for her maid.

Late at night came a little letter—and that was the last of Annette.

"Madame will forgive me, if Madame puts herself in my place. The season was over: I did not wish to stay with Madame: I intended to go home, that is to Geneva. It is a very expensive journey, and so comfortable in a sleeping-car! And my friend, he has given Madame good advice only, not medical, which is punishable by law. I thank Madame for her fine present—it is too fine—and I wish her a speedy recovery."

Then followed the most courteous French assurances of profoundest respect, and also a postscript:

"I would not have left Madame so *à l'improviste* but that the insupportable Summers is come to take my place."

"The vile wretch!" cried Mrs. Blandrey. "That postscript is like her; she was always so considerate of my wants."

"I wonder, was it the chemist's assistant?" said Lucia.

It was not; it was the coiffeur.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE moment Lucia could be dragged to the station, Mrs. Blandrey departed to Berlin. Geneva had become odious to her: of Berlin she had barely heard. But the hotel-proprietor, and still more his sensible English consort, had given advice and shown sympathy, "as if their place had been a second-rate pension, my dear."

"The poor lady's condition might draw tears from a waiter!" said Mrs. Gimpelmayer with much personal bias. Herr Gimpelmayer having heard every detail from his wife first, and then from Mrs. Blandrey, said there was but one thing to say, and that was Berlin, Berlin, Berlin. Frau Gimpelmayer, though an English woman, agreeing with her German husband, said: Berlin, Berlin, Berlin. "If I were bitten to-day," she remarked, stout, comely, convincing, "I should be at the Pasteur Institute to-morrow. If I had your symptom, I should start for Berlin to-night!" The intelligent woman! She had sent her husband to London for his gout, she declared—that being a British specialty. And for her slightly crooked little daughter she had procured a Swedish masseuse. "We can't all know about everything," she remarked. Mrs. Blandrey picking up courage, said: Berlin, Berlin, Berlin.

She said it in the train, as she sucked Mrs. Gimpelmayer's fine farewell grapes. She had always thought of Berlin, if at all, as a barrack full of soldiers, but of course it must be a great scientific emporium; no nation was quite so thorough, in spectacted science, as the German. She talked suddenly, with much satisfaction of a dreary kind, to Lucia about Microscopic Research. She already felt half-healed. "Most marvelous has been of late years, my dear, I have always heard, the advance of Microscopic Research."

The great man she consulted on arrival used the word which Lucia had dreaded, had foreseen, had refused to believe possible—and now it was upon them: operation.

“An operation, the sooner the better.”

“I would much rather die,” stuttered Mrs. Blandrey.

“Take your choice,” said the *Geheimerath*.

As a matter of fact his tongue slipped in the foreign speech: he meant “chance.”

Mrs. Blandrey thought him incredibly brutal and staggered home in infuriate despair.

Lucia remained boxed-up in the stuffy city-hotel with a living bundle of paroxysmal terrors, a thoroughly *dépaysée* homœopathic lady's maid and a justly offended bull-dog. The bull-dog was a comfort.

For one thing, though this may sound unfeeling, there was refreshment in the thought that he lived so entirely outside the hourly palpitation of: Shall I? Shall I not? Mrs. Blandrey, never for one moment at rest, declared herself as much put out by Lucia's invited advice to get the thing over as by Summers' equally courted warning to “beware of the knife.” The dark little onion-filled fourth-floor hotel corner got to resemble a small inferno, made more horrible by a hope that was not a hope but two-thirds a fear. And poor Mrs. Blandrey suffered the torments of the doomed. She took a fortnight to summon courage for a call upon a hotel acquaintance in Berlin society, whom she had originally intended to look upon the day after her arrival.

“She is sure to support the Professor,” wailed Mrs. Blandrey. “And I daren't! Oh, Lucia, I daren't!”

Frau Commerzienrath Süßmilch was the wife of a rich banker, who owned a fine terra-cotta villa with statues, in the Thiergarten quarter not far from the hotel. For nearly sixty years she had enjoyed the manifold good things of modern opulence as only the German quite understands how: then a pitiless trouble had blasted her life: her only son, a partner in the business, unmarried, had been struck down to die slowly, on the Riviera, of hip-disease.

Mrs. Blandrey had been very nice to her in those sorrowful days. The bereaved mother was never again to know very bright ones. She devoted herself to the hygiene of her daughter's delicate children, and to health generally, a thing she had never regarded, before her boy came home with his fatal limp.

At the first mention of the "*Geheimerath*," she cried out. "Oh, not the *Geheimerath*, my dear lady! I could tell you about blunders of his!"—she threw up her thin hands—"Oh, I know he has an immense reputation! The worst men have the biggest reputation. Because they dare so much, and their little mistakes, under the ground, these do not complain!"

"But might not the relatives complain?" ventured Lucia.

"They will not and cannot and may not and don't know how," replied Frau Süssmilch. "Besides, when can you prove an operation ought not to have taken place? When the operator who has grown rich by it bids his students not perform it! As has happened again and again. If my boy had been poor"—she wiped her eyes—"he would have been alive to-day."

"How so?" questioned Mrs. Blandrey.

"They would not have amputated his tubercular limb, and my present doctor would have cured it. Since then, oh, how I have hated money! All this!"—she waved her hand round the luxurious room she sat in—"if my husband would but let me, I would fly from it to-morrow! This house would be an asylum." She added dreamily: "Perhaps it will, some day."

They were all silent, till Mrs. Blandrey said, hesitatingly: "You spoke of a doctor—who cures——"

"Yes, will you try him?" replied Frau Süssmilch briskly. "Does it not sound delightful? A doctor who cures!"

"It does indeed," said poor Mrs. Blandrey.

"But I warn you: he takes a long time about it. You must have patience. Mind, I do not recommend him to you. I only make you acquainted. You must judge for yourself: in matters of medicine everybody must judge for themselves." The Berlin lady spoke fluent English: she did most things fluently. It may be said that she fluently established her English friends in

a bright and admirably managed private "clinic," fluently introduced them to the non-operating physician who enjoyed her favor, and fluently organized and brightened in every possible manner their comfortable and dreary sojourn in the city of military management and commercial noise.

They stayed on from week to week, as one does when the doctor is hopeful. The time was terribly long, and yet they were surprised to find that they had stayed right in the boiling summer, and right through it, and out again at the other end. To Lucia, at least, the days often seemed endless; Mrs. Blandrey, whilst complaining of their monotony, was too engrossed in his treatment really to mind. If faith flagged at any time, the Frau Commerzienrath was always at hand, with some wonderful success, a big bunch of roses, a fresh horror from the opening "theater." Once or twice Lucia had tried to speak of returning to her father, but her courage failed her. For Monck wrote from England that his health was greatly improved: he had no need of the powders, which a great chemist had declared to be perfectly harmless—evidently it was the sea that had not agreed with him: he feared the difficulties about Beechlands would prove insurmountable. The sanatorium was to be opened in the autumn: he had been compelled to accept the purchase-money on her behalf. "Do not worry about anything," he wrote again and again. "Stay with your mother as long as you are able. She has claims: I have none. And, besides, I am all right."

"Lucia, you would never think of deserting me!" Mrs. Blandrey exclaimed, prematurely, from time to time. "I could not stay an hour in this dreadful place, where I don't really understand a word of the language! And I can't ask Dieudonné, with his memories of 1870—he was a volunteer, in his teens, and *most* gallant—to come and live among Prussians! Besides, he doesn't approve of my being here, and writes in every letter that I ought to go to Lourdes! Oh, Lucia, don't desert me! Yes, I know everybody is kind and it's all very nice, and I *do* believe in Dr. Schmunckel, but the *Geheimerath* said I should die, if I wasn't operated, and he *may* be mistaken—I mean Dr. Schmunckel may

be, and, oh, Lucia, you haven't a conception what I suffer! I'm a wreck of my former self."

"You are not in bodily pain, are you, dear?" said Lucia.

"I suppose not. But the anxiety is killing me. However, Dr. Schmunckel says he is sure it will now soon begin to grow smaller. Do you think it is a little smaller, Lucia?"

That was Lucia's daily, hourly ordeal, at any moment, sometimes twice in one morning, she would be asked, eagerly, if the swelling had diminished. She dreaded the occasions, but, as for that, even in the middle of a meal, Mrs. Blandrey, referring to something the doctor had said or done, had unhooked her corsage. The patient tried bravely to take an interest in her surroundings and to stitch at her elaborate fancy-work; her health really was as excellent as worry would allow, but she practically cared for nothing, day or night, except that little swelling, and the question whether it had grown bigger or not.

"Do you think it is smaller, Lucia?"

"It will be, mother: the doctor says so."

"I daren't measure it. But, if I thought it was bigger, I should go to the *Geheimerath* at once. Do you think it is smaller, Summers?"

"No, ma'am, but it would be, if you rubbed it with Conium X."

Thus the weeks slipped away, into months. Lucia, to her quiet astonishment, found herself rather stronger than otherwise, better able than she should have dared to believe possible to bear this pressure put upon her in the long-drawn sultriness of the widespread city. For one thing, she liked the doctor—liked him, as she liked Rook, and young Dr. Russett, as, in spite of the terrible catastrophe of the close, she felt she could not help liking Vouvray. Even old Dr. Russett—as time went on, she preferred to tell herself she had probably greatly wronged. Oh, greatly, if at all! How scornfully his son had resented her suspicions, and no wonder! When a woman like Lucia deems herself unjust, she sees no limit. Especially not, if Randjesvoort are a hundred above par!

The Frau Commerzienrath's *protégé* was a hard-working hum-

ble-hearted practitioner, who took, as regards his patients, vast pains and small pay. The latter Mrs. Blandrey rather deprecated, as suggestive of semi-success. But any one could see that the man, in spite of his non-operating fad, if fad it should prove, loved his profession and honestly worked hard at it. When Mrs. Blandrey's mercury went down, there was always a new achievement handy. But, then, so there is with every patent nostrum. 'Tis the queerest thing about the human body, its capacity and incapacity, both entirely independent of either theory or practice, for getting well again, by accident, after having, accidentally, gone wrong. Nine-tenths of humanity have lost the precious jewel they wore, halfway down the river. They are dabbling to find it again, and twenty hands are eager to help every man dabble. 'Tis a toss-up, if they recover it, by the help of the other dabbling hands or not. Schmunckel didn't think he dabbled: he methodically dived. He came daily, sure that to-morrow the improvement would manifest itself. In the hottest months, when the vast city emptied its thousands, far and near, into the "*Sommerfrische*," he remained at his post. Frau Süßmilch remained also, in spite of her husband's indignant protests, working restlessly for the good cause among rich and poor.

But the leaves had fallen from the trees and the weather was wet and miserable, before the lengthening treatment came abruptly to an end. The beginning of that end was a lithographed letter which Mrs. Blandrey received one morning, while Lucia was out at her painting, and which, not being able to decipher German, the patient laid before the doctor on his arrival. "My daughter deserts me," complained Mrs. Blandrey, who had developed incongruous querulousness. "She takes motor-cabs for miles, away into the Potsdam woods with no other companion than that dog."

"She paints very well," said the friendly doctor.

"She will get murdered, and I shall be left all alone," replied Mrs. Blandrey. "In a country where I don't know the language. What does that letter say?"

"It is not a letter. It is a prospectus. It is from one of the

thousand—how do you say?—sharks that prey on the sick public. It is from a woman who offers to come and rub you with an ointment: see!” He laughed and tearing the paper into snips, flung them into the coal-scuttle.

“How could she know about me?” said Mrs. Blandrey, pensively watching the fragments.

“They inquire of the servants. You will now soon experience the benefit of my treatment.”

When he was gone, Mrs. Blandrey read a page or two of a new novel, then she wrote to Dieudonné, explaining for the twentieth time why she could not at this moment go to Lourdes with him, and then she rang for Summers to pick the scraps of paper out among the coals. Summers objected but suddenly surrendered on Mrs. Blandrey’s offering, of her own account, to swallow Plumbum. The doctor had torn the fragments provokingly small, but they were patiently pasted together like a Chinese puzzle, when Lucia came home, from a long, quiet paint in the Grönau woods, to decipher them. That evening Frau Schlamm was written to, and next morning she appeared with her little green pot. Mrs. Blandrey, exceedingly nervous, pointed out that she must be off the premises before eleven o’clock struck. “Never fear, *Meine Liebe!*” said Frau Schlamm, “I am a chiropodist *only*: I have come for your corns!” And, as the elder lady cried out in protest, and Lucia, who had translated, looked wonderment: “People have corns everywhere,” added Frau Schlamm coolly. “Are yours on your head?” She moved round, her little pot in her fat leathery hands, irresistibly suggestive, with her protuberant face and general fat leatheriness, of a squat hippopotamus in bad need of water.

“The law!” she explained to Lucia, mysteriously touching her lips. “Ah, the law!—it is terrible in Deutschland! But—thanks be to Providence!—*ach, du gütige Vorsehung!*—corns are found everywhere! I—I have rubbed them away on the breast—on the back—on the forehead!” She dropped her voice. “On the forehead that wears a crown!” she said solemnly, and rumped her enormous chin against her bosom. “A crown! I

have worked in palaces, for gold, and among the poor sausage-makers, for nothing! I—the *Frau Hofhühneraugenoperateurin Schlamm!*”

“What is ‘Hofhühner’, Lucia?”

“Chickens, I believe, mamma. I don’t understand half she says. Hadn’t you better send her away?”

“Certainly not. Sometimes I fancy you are so happy with your painting here, that you don’t want we to get better quicker than you can help.”

Lucia accepted the natural development of fractious invalidism. “I!” cried the big lady of the little green pot, “I will rub away this—corn in—how long?—say three weeks!—I, the—Hof and all the rest of it Schlamm!”

“In three weeks—oh!” cried Mrs. Blandrey. “But what must I say, if the doctor sees?”

“If the doctors saw, I should have been in prison years ago,” replied Frau Schlamm impressively. As she rubbed, she discoursed without interruption of the great people who had come to her from all parts of the world: the names were impossible to verify: the titles were sonorous: Mrs. Blandrey picked up wonderfully under this tonic, to sink again after the woman’s departure, living for the next week or two on a switch-back of hope and fear. Then Lucia awoke one night to find a white-robed figure standing by her side. “Lucia, have you a tape-measure!” said Mrs. Blandrey and burst into tears.

“Your patience is rewarded: I am curing you,” said Dr. Schmunckel next morning at the end of his visit. He rubbed his hands cheerfully: he beamed satisfaction from his intelligent eyes. “Three months hence you will go to Wiesbaden for an after-treatment, and next summer you will be well!” He drove off in triumphant happiness to tell the Frau Commerzienrath, and that lady, flying straight to the “*Privat-Klinik*,” ran up against the grey hippopotamus lumbering down the steps with her little green pot.

“Who was that queer person?” she inquired when the first transports were over.

Mrs. Blandrey hesitated. "A chiropodist," she replied. "She comes for Lucia's corns."

"How unfair!" protested Lucia, laughing, as soon as they were alone. But Mrs. Blandrey made no answer, gazing away into the drizzle of the autumn Berlin boulevard, with its rusty trees and musty human masses, and the huddle of its electric trams. "But I'm so glad—oh, so glad!" said Lucia, "if——"

Mrs. Blandrey flung herself round: Thomas à Kempis and the Figaro fell from her knees to the floor. "If!" she cried, "glad! Do you think I should be glad of an 'if?' I know! I know! Oh, Lucia, since this morning I *know*! Oh, you may say you're glad, and you've been very sweet, I don't say, but you can't dream, nobody can *dream* what it means to another! Life! Life! I'm going to live. I'm not going to die. I'm going to live. I'm not going to die. I'm going to live. Oh, don't talk of 'being glad:' oh, Lucia, all the horrible, endless agony suddenly rolled away! I'm going to live! The sun shines again, and the birds sing I'm going where they do so. I'm going to live again! Again! Again! Again!" She sat trying to master her emotion, stroking her soft, round arm. "My dear, dear body," she murmured, and stroked her round, pink arm.

Ten days later Rob, from the window of a reserved compartment, scornfully contemplated his brass tax-medal, as flung by the still more scornful Summers on to the Station platform. No more "*Hundesperre*" for Rob on his way to England, where not one of the disagreeables existed which Summers had found so plentifully sprinkled all over "abroad." Rob's mistress, had announced her immediate returning to her father not, certainly, in the ecstatic spirit which had prompted Mrs. Blandrey's telegram to the Count de la Rochefeuilletas:

Join me wherever you like! Wire to Frankforter Hof, Frankfort. Let us pilgrimage to Lourdes together. I am healed! I am well!

"I can go there to give thanks: with pleasure," said Mrs. Blandrey. "I have always felt, if I may say so, that it would hardly run to more. I am not an enthusiast, Lucia: I take things

calmly. 'Let us pilgrimage,' sounds charming, Dieudonné won't know it isn't English. Dear me, his small knowledge of our language is going to be the greatest trouble of my life."

The night at Frankfort, ere mother and daughter turn south and north with henceforth a deep gulf between them—that night was a concession to the jubilant German friends at the station who believed in "an after-treatment" at Wiesbaden as the consummation of their cure. The good doctor stood on the platform with tears in his eyes. "I knew it," he said. "Ah, I knew it. I shall save thousands!" Frau Süssmilch climbed up on the step as the train was moving. "And what would the *Geheimerath* say, if he knew?" she questioned, exultant. An official cried out at her. The train was off.

"I think he would say he had been mistaken in his diagnosis," remarked Lucia thoughtfully. "And I think he would say he was glad."

"Oh, of course, Lucia," replied Mrs. Blandrey with vigor, "we shall have you telling people next that I haven't been ill at all."

CHAPTER XL

HAVE you any letters or telegrams for me?" said Lucia, coming down from her room to the porter's lodge at the Frankfort Hotel, alone and forlorn, if you like to put it so, for her mother had at once hurried southwards, Lourdes-wards, Dieudonné-wards, straight into health and happiness—away!

"No, madam, but I have a shentleman," replied the gold-laced functionary, stolidly departing to look for said article. Lucia, turning, saw her father behind her.

"Did I frighten you, child? I thought you knew. I had given the waiter my card."

"Oh, father, have you come here all the way to fetch us?"

"Us? Surely your mother——" he looked alarmed.

"I meant me and Rob. Mamma is gone."

"To fetch you? Well, not exactly. I wanted a little preliminary talk. But the first thing to do now is to have dinner."

"But the talk——?"

"My dear Lucia, have you forgotten about 'Fate cannot harm me: I have dined to-day?'"

"You frighten me," she said, pausing in the lighted entry of the restaurant.

He laughed, not in quite the happiest note. "No, no," he said, "only it is such a golden rule. I hate business of any kind before dinner—don't you?—and after."

She cheerfully accepted the well-known accent and sank back with deep content into the kindred calm of closer sympathy. When presently he remarked, in the bright flow of his superficial talk:

"Oh, no: any one can see we are father and daughter," she

was startled to realize her concurrence: she also had been feeling how intimately they were parent and child.

"With apologies from the grub to the butterfly," he said, "although I'm afraid your aunt would say that wasn't natural history." He talked a great deal about his sister, as if glad to cling to the subject, about her ill-health, and her energy, and her wonderful studies in the sensitive life of plants. "It is horrible and entrancing and unthinkable," he said. "It appears that all plants, especially at the roots, experience pain pretty well as we do! By the bye, Lucia, Dr. Rook says your aunt's delicate health and yours, and I fear I must add my own, are all caused by the same constitutional defect! How nice to have so much in common!"

"I am so much better," said Lucia quickly.

"So am I. You are quite right: don't let's talk of our healths. It is the agreeable privilege of the healthy." He laid down his half-finished bunch of grapes. "All this forced rubbish!" he said (not alluding to his own conversation). "Fruit with a taste is a thing of the past."

"You are a Sybarite," she answered gayly, "what you need is a little hard living."

He looked at her, so tenderly, so anxiously, her bright glance dropped. "Do you think so?" he said thoughtfully. "Well——" but again he leaped away from some avowal she felt he was unwillingly approaching: "Will you take coffee? I have given up smoking: what do you say to that? I have become careful of my health again, you see, in my old age. There's the forbidden subject again! We none of us can keep away from it nowadays, try as we will."

"You were going to tell me something important," suggested Lucia.

"Well—yes. Not so *very* important, and nothing to be alarmed about. You wouldn't mind so very much—would you?—not getting back that house of yours?"

"I couldn't expect to," she answered quietly. "People so seldom get back what they've lost."

"There's a brave girl! You make the rest quite easy. Lucia, look at the other end of the room, whether you see any one there whom you know."

Lucia gaped slowly into the medley of strange faces laughing and chattering amongst the flowers and glass. "No," she answered. "Whom do you——"

"But I do," he interrupted, with suppressed agitation. "There's a man sitting there—he of all others! I'm sure it's he. You don't know him—a man whom I—how curious the world is!—I must absolutely speak to that Prussian officer-looking man in the corner before we say another word." He got up and passed hastily down the long dining-hall, bidding a waiter take his card to the gentleman at a side-table with a showy woman in diamonds. The gentleman started and came forward in eager amazement to meet him, card in hand.

"My benefactor!" cried the gentleman. Lucius said, more calmly:

"Herr Von Plöck."

"I owe you my life," added the German.

"Do not mention it," answered Lucius. "Can you spare me five minutes to talk of a less valuable debt?" As he spoke, he led the way into the small writing-room, deserted at that hour. The German followed, a little enthusiastic, a little *gêné*.

"I am glad," said Von Plöck, speaking hastily, for Lucius stood hesitative, "to be able to thank you, in calmer moments, for your kindness to me on that night. I have often wanted to do so."

"You wisely delayed," answered Lucius. "All things come round to those who wait."

"You must permit me to present you to my wife. I may perhaps say: she knows nothing."

"So much the better," replied Lucius, still in the same queer, courteous tone, which his companion, as a foreigner, hardly fathomed. "But, perhaps just——"

"Are you passing through? We live here at Wiesbaden, you know, like so many of our German invalids, and—how say

you?—half-pays. We come in often; Frankfort is gay, and my wife, the doctors say, requires gaiety. I have money now: my father-in-law is dead. We stay at *Weihnachten* with the children; then we go to the Riviera. I hope we will meet there?"

"Hardly," said Lucius. "I am glad to hear you have money."

At this—the tone of it—the German looked amiable surprise, but nature, dinner, and the coincidence had made him voluble. "I shall not play this season," he said. "At least, I hope not. You see, there is no more the imperativeness. I went back: with your money I gained some of what I had lost."

"With my money," said Lucius quickly, significantly. "So we come to—will you allow me?—what I call your less valuable debt. The world is so curious, as I was remarking to—to the lady who is with me—now we meet again, it is you who are rich and I who am ruined."

"Poor chap!" cried Von Plöck (pleased, even in that moment, at the Riviera-learned colloquialism). "Ah!" he added, "I told you you would go on playing. We all do. I should—perhaps—had you won that game of *écarté*."

"Excuse me, I believe I pay my debts, and keep my word," replied Lucius dryly. "As for keeping your word, you were saved that dilemma. As for paying your debt—I am so short of money that I can hardly help troubling you—as it seems to be convenient——?"

"I have money, but I am not rich," explained the German, coloring with annoyance. "The money is my wife's, but I shall be very pleased to lend you some. Or to give—if five hundred marks——"

Lucius stood away from him in the full electric glare of the little yellow-satin room. "How many thousands were there in the drawer?" said Lucius.

"Thousands in the drawer?"

"Thousands in the drawer which was empty when I returned. I have never bothered about that money, or about any money—more fool I!—but now, if you could let me have that money back, it would make all the difference in the world to me!" He

stared anxiously at the German, defying his reply. He hardly believed he would get the money: the sum was too enormous: he was too unlucky or too clumsy. But Lucia sat outside awaiting his unexpected avowal of long-drawn clumsiness, of widespread unluckiness.

The German turned from a pale puce, presumably the nearest approach of his healthy complexion, to green. His reply, when at last it came, was disconcerting. He said: "Are you a good shot?"

"No," burst out Monck. "Do you want to kill me after robbing me?"

"All the contrary. I want to be—how is it?—quits with the man who believes me—so much I have understood—a thief. As a German officer, I, who shoot dead, I should kill you in a duel. I give you your life: you gave me mine—*voilà!*"

"Do you mean to say you did not take the money out of the drawer? Why, you wrote that you took it! I do not keep such notes—any notes—but you wrote!"

"I took the money I won from you at our game, a strange game, but I won it honestly. I went: after what had passed, I could not bear to meet you again. Ah, look here!" he struck his forehead—"the dirty Polish doctor, your friend, he found advantage in my letter: he must have taken your money: he played much at the tables after you left: he lost all."

"We aren't quits," said Lucius bitterly, "for I gave you a life you value, and you leave me one I loathe." He pulled himself together. "All right," he said, extending his hand, "I owe you an immense apology, but, you see, I didn't know you. You'll accept it, won't you?"

The German's blue eyes grew soft. "Let us think of something I can do to help you," he answered, with a doubly energetic grip. "If you could let me have—say, a thousand francs—to play for you at Monte Carlo, I feel sure I should have luck—eh, what say you? What a pity," he added reflectively, "that the money of the Pole—your money—went back to the Bank!"

"Its natural destination," said Monck, with his shrug of the

shoulders. "No, thanks: you can do nothing for me. But I think I had better postpone the honor of an introduction till some other time. I—I must finish a conversation with my daughter." He went out hurriedly: the disappointment of the sudden hope had been too bitter.

He found Lucia sitting by the half-stripped table, patient, as is the duty of our woman-kind. "Your coffee is quite cold, dear: you must have some fresh," she said.

"Yes, Lucia, a full room's the best place for a beastly talk. I've got to tell you that Grettrix has made away with my money." He sat down. "Waiter," he said. "Coffee! Out!" He turned to her. She was sitting, with downcast eyes, tracing shapes in the table-cloth. He thought how slender her fingers were. But she looked up at him, at once.

"Mine is left, I suppose, for us both?" she said.

"But that disposes of Beechlands, which I fear you couldn't get back anyhow—certainly not without costly legal proceedings—it was those I was going to undertake. The Sanatorium was opened last week, with the necessary professional clap-trap: it's in *Health* and in *Modern Hygiene* and——"

"I know," said Lucia, wincing slightly. "Mary Corry sent me them all."

"My writing to Grettrix and asking for accounts after twenty years finished him," continued Lucius. "He couldn't face me or answer me in any way. So before I reached London, he absconded—heaven—or the other place—knows where."

"Had he a wife?" said Lucia.

"You dear child, yes. And the usual innocent half-educated daughters. Your Aunt Ermentrude is interested in those. I admit that it was hard of me to come down on him like this after twenty years of undisturbed possession. But it wasn't even that: the poor man seems to have speculated in everything—what is the correct word?—speculable?"

"Is that really all?" said Lucia, drawing "L. s. d.'s" across the table-cloth.

He broke into so bright a laugh that some of their neighbors

looked round and smiled. "Oh, you heaven-sent child of mine!" he cried, "*O patre sano filia sanior!* Yes, that's all. It's ten thousand tons of dreadfulness that you've kicked off my heart into the sea. No, ladies don't kick. Never mind. There's no disgrace or shame of any kind: only I used to have more money than I wanted, and now I haven't as much as I need."

"I don't suppose I should like poverty," said Lucia, "but you see, we're not poor. Did you come all the way here, poor darling, to confess? I must say, your epistolary accounts were, to say the least, flattered."

"Letter-writing was never my forte," replied Lucius modestly. "You see, for twenty years, I have had nobody to write to. And I think a letter should be pleasant or not at all. You had trouble enough without hearing, uselessly, about mine. But now an explanation had become inevitable. For, Lucia, I am not going back to England."

"Then I shall lose Summers," said Lucia.

"Let us be serious, Lucia,"—his voice trembled—"I cannot live on your money—I never did—never was allowed to do—anything for my own child: I can't come back to sponge on her. Besides, I needn't,"—he threw back his head—"By the help of some old friends at the Museum I have got a semi-official commission to look up the Hispano-Moorish pottery at the Cluny—it fits into my Mexican book, and into their whole African pottery business, which they've got quite wrong, as I shall prove to them. Never mind about that: it gives me six months' hard work in Paris, at any rate: after that I can see. I haven't felt so well for years. I haven't had an attack, not even when the news came about Grettrix. You see, it came all at once, in a letter, without any bother of suspense."

"Paris," said Lucia, and dug little P.'s into the unresisting table-cloth. "I am sure you and I will be very happy in Paris. Henry used to say Paris wasn't exactly 'abroad.' Possibly Summers may think so, too. Is there *Hundesperre* in Paris?"

"Is there what?"

"Do they muzzle the dogs?"

"I can't imagine their muzzling anybody. That's the worst of it. It's the most unmuzzled place in the world."

"Well," said Lucia rising from table, and picking Rob's lump of sugar off the little tray. "Busk has written to say all the furniture's ruined in the warehouse, any way. So the longer it stays there, the better for my peace of mind."

"Lucia, I cannot accept your sacrifice."

"What sacrifice? Did I say that when you allowed me to share your yacht?"

"Well, there's one thing—and one only—I mean, one that isn't quite selfish—to be said for your spending some time in Paris. You can try Révillard."

"What is Révillard?" asked Lucia, ringing the lift-bell and thinking about Summers.

"Lucia, what newspapers did you read in Berlin? What did people talk about?"

"If it's a treatment, they talked about German treatments, not French."

"But the lift-boy knows. You know about Révillard?"

"No, sir," said the sharp, pale little page.

"Not about the professor who renews the life-power."

"Oh—the man who makes old people young? I didn't know his name, sir. Yes, I saw the pictures in the *Woche*."

"That's how *he* puts it," said Lucius, strolling along the corridor. "Révillardisation is the one chance for your complaint: I asked Rook."

"How is he, the dear old man? I had no idea you knew Dr. Rook?"

"I went to see him on purpose."

"How good most of them are—these doctors—and how little they can do! Well, father, so we start to-morrow for Paris!"

"And Révillard," said Monck.

Lucia made no reply, fondling the dog, who had run out of her room.

"Do you know who has gone to work under him?" continued

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Lucius, watching her. "Young Russett. Rook told me. He has gone to see for his father what the new thing is worth."

"Oh!" said Lucia, looking steadily down, "I am so happy to think you have your powders."

"Quite so." He hesitated. "I'm afraid, Lucia, that also was a little epistolary inaccuracy. I haven't had them analyzed. If they're worthless, or worse than worthless, I'd much rather not know. I prefer to keep them, as a sort of talisman, like this."

"But, father, then they *would* be worthless, if an attack came on?"

"If a very bad attack came on, I'm not sure I shouldn't risk it. But I haven't had one since that trouble on the *Bacchante*. Don't let's think of it. Good night."

CHAPTER XLI

LUCIA and her father spent the winter at an hotel in Paris which shall be nameless, because it is the best hotel in Paris, and because there are at least a dozen equally good. It was not an expensive dwelling-place with its dead-season "arrangement" prices, nor did Monck's ruin prove of that dramatic kind which scrapes the last scrap of butter off a dwindling crust. On the contrary, Mrs Blandrey's bankers came forward at the critical moment, with the information that a payment of one thousand pounds per annum, made by Mr. Gretrix during the first dozen years after the divorce, lay, accumulated, at Mr. Monck's disposal, they having refused to return these monies, when Mr. Gretrix redemanded them in shadier days. Therefore there was bread and ham in the quiet Paris hostelry, which things are an allegory of private sitting-rooms and secluded meals. The feeding tourist was apt to stare at Lucia.

"*Vous êtes beaucoup trop jolie pour être veuve,*" the Geneva hair-dresser had declared, and the remark, in spite of its æsthetic absurdity, would have commanded Monck's unwilling acquiescence as he sat solicitously watching the daughter whose brief, married life must look to her own heart a vanishing dream. More than a year had already slipped by since its tragical close. In truth, she was too young and too lovely, her father reflected anxiously. A nature like his, all over feelers, had long ago acutely realized the exact quality of Lucia's unfathered young affection for the husband some thirty years her senior. He admired Mrs. Blandrey's arrangement, but then, he had always done that. "And it is a curious fact," reasoned this well-affected observer of the subtler sex, "that the nicer girls accept the hearts of elder suitors.

Not so very curious either, if you look at the know and the don't know of the nicer girls' minds." Whence he concluded to bask in the sun, while it shone upon him, prepared for an eclipse.

The tranquil life of genial work flowed on towards the summer. Monck delved into his subject with the persistence not infrequently found in an indolent man tired of indolence—"as cracked as his pottery" said his former wife to her latest husband."

"You mean?" replied Dieudonné.

The Countess frowned irritably. There were stones in the coronet—nine pearls—of Adelaide de la Roche-feuilletas—Dieudonville.

Lucia painted in the Louvre with satisfaction even to others than herself and her teacher. "Happy child," wrote her mother, now reduced to epistolary intercourse "with my only child" and a possible brief encounter in the future,—“Happy child, with no wish and no need, like so many a great artist, to go painting yourself. Send me the enclosed. You can get it at Dupajoux's. Oh, Lucia, I am growing terribly stout!”—Nemesis, surely, has developed this entirely new tendency to quibble in the French Countess to whom Lucius, in his courtship, read "Ben Battle" without her perceiving that it contained a play upon words.

"Yes, of course I ought to have broken it off then and there," admits Lucius, "but a man can't break off an engagement. I'm so very glad I didn't"—and he glances at his daughter.

The Countess de la Roche-feuilletas has become a fervent Roman Catholic (her figure improved wonderfully at Lourdes: it has now long been her only preoccupation): she is a Legitimist, a Lady of various things and Patroness of others: her French is atrocious, her health robust. Her fortune is, of course, lamentably inadequate. Her husband, sincere in all his creeds, religious and political, frequently suffers tortures. He would like to live in his ruined chateau and prune his familiar vines.

"Lucia," said her father, after listening to one of the Countess's epistles, "promise me that if ever you should contemplate marrying again——"

"Father!"

"It is not an impossible contingency."

Monck gazed out at the spring buds—the very earliest grey swellings—all over the trees in the Tuileries garden.

Lucia, with a heightened color, resumed her mother's letter.

"I don't contemplate anything of the kind," she said.

"Naturally. Besides, I fear you are not one of the women who 'contemplate' an offer. Yet that is a wise attitude! However, all I was going to say was: make sure of your husband's eyes."

Lucia studied her letter.

"We marry for a good many things. Permanent advantages, for instance, or, more foolishly, personal attractions. But the safest thing to marry for—trust one who has made a mess of it—is the look in your future consort's eyes."

"Henry had the kindest eyes," said Lucia.

"So you have honestly mourned him. I can imagine a woman being the happier companion of a husband with cruel eyes, or vainglorious eyes, or empty eyes, if her own eyes were empty, or cruel, or vainglorious, but what I can't imagine is that two people should enjoy each other's interminable company, if their eyes, when they meet, look apart."

Lucia smiled gravely. "You remind me of the American at Peysonnax," she said. "She telegraphed to her *fiancé*. 'Can two walk together unless they be agreed?'"

"Well, there can't be a closer bond than a thorough-going fad! Art or, better still, hygiene! 'Jack Sprat' wouldn't work in real life. No woman could stand her husband eating lean, if *she* thought fat was better. Why, many a separation has had far less cause than that!" He checked himself, recollecting. "No, no," he said. "Absolute certainty of sympathy in small things—that's the only safe settlement to marry on."

Lucia, in silence, demurred. She had always disliked the close scent of the gardenia. Otherwise, as far as she could recall, there had been no particular divergence or agreement in her smooth side-by-side life with the husband who loved her.

"When married people are unhappy," she said, taking up and laying down her letters, "I fancy it must mostly be the fault of the wife. Now, here is Mary Corry complaining again of her husband. The habit has become chronic. She thinks of things he really can't let her do, and then she complains!"

"By no means unusual," said Lucius, actually grinning.

"She has taken Luke Willes as a man-servant in spite of his limp—well and good. She now wants his drunken mother as a cook."

"Is she a good cook?" asked Monck.

"She isn't a cook. She only drinks."

"Mr. Corry must be a very weak-minded person," replied Monck with energy.

"So Mary writes that his ill-temper would drive her out of her senses, were she not a hypno-spiritist!"

"Out of them already," amended Lucius.

"I pity the husband. Lucia, if I saw you married again, and unhappy, I should pity the wife."

She laughed, a little nervously. "Of course, dear; your own daughter: But what makes you talk like this?"

He came back to her suddenly, his face working with suppressed emotion.

"Oh, I want you to be happy, to be happy!" he said, and bent over her, kissing her forehead, and hastened out of the room.

Lucia remained disturbed: it would not be true to say bewildered. As the winter hurried past, he had shown with increasing intense-ness, though never yet thus manifestly, that anxiety for her future was beginning to eat away his peace.

"My chances are over," he had twice said brusquely. "Yours are to come." It was manifest, that he feared, with an almost sickening dread, as her mourning lightened, that this idolized daughter, with her very different temperament, might be launched again by some happy-go-lucky accident, in the mother's light-hearted manner, on the perilous matrimonial sea. Not perilous to the mother, whose bark would always swim. Rightly or

wrongly, he deeply resented in the secrecy of his own heart the arranged marriage with Lomas. "Most people get but one opportunity," he said to himself, with a half-sneer at his quondam wife. He loathed his divorce. And he brooded on possibilities with growing clearness, possibilities that had seemed looming, but dim and far-away on the yacht.

At first he had entreated her, pestered her, perhaps, to try the wondrous new electric pressure, till one night—a Sunday night—she had entered his room suddenly, without warning, and placed her hand flat on his crockery notes. He looked up from them in astonishment.

"I am interrupting you," she began hastily. "Oh, I know it's the most hateful thing a woman can do; but with you, it isn't counting up, so it isn't *so* bad! Oh, it's bad enough, but I can't help it. I want to say something please, at once."

"But, Lucia—sit down."

"No, no; I want to ask at once, please, standing here. I want to ask you, father, please, to take me just as I am, whether you think me better, or worse, but I *am* better, only never mind—but never again to ask me to do any treatment or run to a specialist or do anything but just healthily live my life. Healthily and sanely and quietly live my life."

"My dearest child, when occasion offers——"

"What is occasion? Oh, father, we make occasion. In this modern international existence of ours, there's occasion everywhere. Look at us: what has medicine made of our lives, suddenly in *so* short a time? Henry and I, less than two years ago, at Beechlands! And the specialist comes into our existence with his careless 'science,' and all at once we are in his hands, and in those of the sanatorium man, and the brother specialist and the correspondent abroad and the whole train of—— Oh, I don't blame them; I'm going to be unjust again." She mastered herself. "But they bid us sacrifice everything, life itself, for health—surely that is unreasonable from our standpoint, if not from theirs. And can they give us health in the end? Not they!" Her voice rang out. "I am going to live for life again, not for health,"

she hurried on. "It has been a nightmare of nearly two years, and Henry——" She burst into tears.

"My own darling!" he half rose.

"Hush, don't mind me! Why, you yourself practise what I preach! My nightmare has come to an end. I am going to pick up the fragments of my life, and live on. I thought it out on the boat, I have been able to *live* it in Berlin. As I said on the boat, I suppose we aren't all worthy to be healed. There were many lepers, you remember, in Israel! But oh, that doesn't mean that we're to live for our health till we die, father. Not to give up our whole being, our duties, our homes, our surroundings to their happy-go-lucky, change-to-morrow science! That is what they ask of us—we are nothing to them but just 'material'—and they have us in their power with their unprovable: 'If you don't!'"

"But this man lives round the corner: it would be no trouble —"

"And if I go to him, who knows where he will send me?—what course he will recommend for the next two, three years? Perhaps I shall have to go and live, *and die*, at Davos, or in Samoa, or in some horrible, back-street establishment here! for some treatment they'll abandon twelve months hence without remembering to write to me to come home! Why, I heard at Mentone of a man who died of home-sickness in Samoa, who, now-a-days would have been cured, they say, at an open-air place in his native Scotland! No!" She shuddered long and softly, from the crown of her head to her feet, and she put her arm around his neck. "It came to me in church this evening, more clearly than I have felt it all these last months," she said. "St. Paul was ill also—so was Timothy—yet they did their work. I am going back home to my own natural surroundings. When my pain and my weakness come, if they come, I shall bear them. If Dr. Rook, or whatever medical man is near, can alleviate them, so much the better! For the rest, God will help me to live or to die!"

"Lucia," he answered, shading his eyes, "what you say is

that, and what you mean is this: 'I am resolved to remain absolutely free so as to go back with my father, as soon as his work takes him to England again.'

Her hand caressed his cheek, but she did not immediately reply.

"You have reckoned without my singular perspicacity——"

She sank down beside him, and in broken accents, "Don't," she said, "Oh, father, let me stay with you! Oh, think, if I had stayed at Beechlands—I don't reproach myself, for we knew nothing then—we were quite, quite ignorant—of all I know now. Let me go back to Dr. Rook."

"You wouldn't like to live *there*?" he asked quickly.

"Why not—if it suited you! It's my home—where I belong. I had my work, such as it was, among the village girls, and the children. It isn't much to mention, but—but it was just what I did."

"But your pains, Lucia!—the fits of pain you are always trying to hide!"

"My grace is sufficient for thee," said Lucia in a whisper. "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

In the safe silence of her bedroom she drew a note from her pocket and re-read it. It was a short note—one perusal had sufficed.

DEAR MRS. LOMAS,

I am impertinent and unreasonable, but I can't help it. In spite of my former fiasco, I boldly venture to tell you that a remedy has been found for your complaint. It is the treatment I have come to study here in Paris, for as yet it can only be applied here. Humbly, shamefacedly, but very sincerely yours.

J. RUSSETT.

She sat down with the letter in her lap. He saw her, and spoke to her constantly. It was curious to think he should have written, yet he himself, that very evening, had told her why.

On one of the very first Sunday mornings, at the Rue d'Aguesseau, glancing up from her Prayer-book, she had met his gaze. She had not met it again during the service, but that was

because she did not again look his way. He was waiting at the door, however, for a few courteous sentences—all he got or could claim, Sunday after Sunday, just the reasonably inevitable—"I am with my father," she said: "He doesn't come to church. I'm afraid I mustn't ask you to call. My father is, quite irrationally, of course, much annoyed about Beechlands. He misunderstands what occurred."

"But you are not annoyed?" he said eagerly.

"Oh, no; how could I be?"—she spoke a little coldly none the less, for she presumed him to know about the telegram and the brief complication connected with the purchase, whilst, in fact, he knew nothing, absolutely nothing, but his father's: "Scragge says we've paid more than it's worth."

He was wonderfully regular at church, even once or twice more exact than she, and she never succeeded in getting out before he did. Nor did she deliberately avoid the few steps along the road, the few sentences about current events. His work at the hospital was miles away, in a part she couldn't, at first, find on the map. He said he liked it, once when she asked, and turned away from the subject.

"Don't talk of my letter," he answered, as soon as she referred to it, "I couldn't help writing it. I don't know how I dared after—after everything. But you must ask your doctor—not me, not me—I suppose you've a doctor here?—ask him to find out; they're so ignorant about new things, the general practitioners—ask him—it's wonderful."

"I'm so glad you like your work," she said. But she went home to her father and said, as we have seen, a great deal more to him.

Paris is large, and you don't meet, unless your habits mingle. Especially not, if one of you discreetly drops out of sight, at opera or picture-show, because her father, you know, most outrageously, of course, is so awfully put out about the Beechlands Sanatorium. Rather caddish, as she must think, so there's no use bothering her.

But people who skilfully avoid meeting always run up against

each other in the end. Russett, almost always engrossed in his work, found himself jammed into a corner with Lucius at a crowded semi-scientific "At Home." Before he was out of the corner, he had recommended, in spite of a firm resolve not to do so, the high-pressure treatment as a certain cure for Mrs. Lomas. All the way home Monck debated why Lucia had not spoken more freely of her meetings with Jack Russett. He asked her, and she answered with innocent surprise—

"Why, I told you he came to church, as you ought to do! You don't like to hear about the Russetts, father or son."

No wonder that he came back to her suddenly and kissed her, unusually, on the forehead. "Oh, I want you to be happy; to be happy," he said.

No wonder that she looked up at him affectionately. "It is so good of you to consent to live near Chillingford," she said. "Are you sure you will be able to do your writing there?"

"The sooner we settle down the better," he made answer. "We can start by the end of the month."

CHAPTER XLII

ROB really quite prefers the new small house near Chillingford. There are no ducks or swans or other superfluous animals, except chickens behind wire-netting and Monck's cat on her master's writing-table. This last is of course an absurdity, and a bit of an insult as well, but it has the advantage of allowing Rob to sneak occasionally unreprieved into said master's easy-chair. Summers frankly regrets Paris (as an excuse for constant complaining), not certainly on account of anything French to be had there, but solely for the sake of all the English things, so much better, says Summers, than anything she can procure at home. It appears that all the really nice English people live in Paris, and there sell cheap in spite of duties, the pure teas, flannels, homœopathic medicines, and so on, which are extinct on the right side of the Channel. But you don't discover that, till, deserting the wrong side, you have endured the crossing for the very last time in your life (be that life long or short) on a stormy day, a so-called "floating-palace" (float!) and "*anti-mal-de-mer*."

Lucius agrees with Rob, chiefly on account of the feeling of fixity, the being no longer able to wander where you like in a world which, nowadays, is all pretty much the same in the end. And the specialist was right who said his attacks, with careful management, might remain away for months, even years.

At first Mary Corry was the chief trouble, fore-destined thereto by her nature and her great fondness for Lucia. She compassioned unceasingly not so much Lucia the bereaved as Lucia the bereft.

"You can get another husband: I wish I could!" she said

with that horrible frankness of a wife who no longer looks back. She spoke on every occasion of the lost glories of Beechlands. "I am going there," she said, "the very moment I can get Arthur to see how ill I am. Men are so selfish, but I don't leave him a moment's peace."

She accompanied Lucia in all sorts of philanthropic expeditions, and she made queer passes over the Sunday School children's heads, frightening them horribly till they picked up courage and laughed at her as daft.

"You look blooming; Dr. Russett's an extraordinary man!" said Mary Corry.

For a moment Lucia seemed puzzled. "Dr.—oh, you mean the father," said Lucia.

"Yes, of course: whom else should I mean? I am going to consult him, though you never, Lucia, were half as ill as I."

It was a curious quality in Lucia's nature that she did not mind her female friends being quite as ill, or far more ill, than she. She was sorry for Mary, and was almost relieved to receive a letter from her presently headed *Beechlands Sanatorium* in great scarlet print, with a lot more about managers, salubrity, parcels-post, and the rest. "Entirely renovated and refitted"—"the sanatory arrangements by Messrs., etc." Under this wrote Mary:

"You *must* come and see me, I am so lonely; oh, do come Lucia! Besides, it will be so interesting for you to see the house; they have made it quite beautiful, and, of course, three times the size. I am sitting writing under your copper beech. Come to-morrow."

Lucia went. The house was not visible from the road; its changes, therefore, were new to her. When we suffer acutely, a small thing turns the scale; she felt she could not take her constant companion, the dog.

It was Mary's first question, under the copper beech. "Oh, why didn't you bring Rob? Look! here is the mark where his basket used to hang."

Mary was voluble, as usual, and especially triumphant. The

arrangements were admirable. Lucia must see the whole building. Her little room was Dr. Russett's sanctum: he motored down twice a week for consultations. "And there's a delightful head-nurse, his right hand," said Mary Corry. "Such an excellent nurse. She's had some great disappointment. I must see and introduce you!"

She managed it on a later occasion, and presented Mrs. Lomas to Sister Hilda.

When the worst was over, Lucia went frequently, for Mary was wretchedly unhappy and anxious about her ailments and in constant need of "a change." She had got into her head that she was going, from physical causes, out of her mind. She would sit descanting for hours to Lucia of the various faithcures she had tried in vain.

"But Russett is going to cure me at last," she said. "You ought, in decency, to stop and thank him, Lucia. He inquired after you most kindly."

Lucia, however, maneuvered to avoid such a contingency—an easy thing enough, where the great Chief kept, with military exactitude, to his hours. It was her friend who deliberately out-maneuvered her by that simplest of all stratagems—a lie.

"He isn't coming to-day," said Mary fretfully, "so you might just as well finish 'A Broken Heart'"—Marry Corry liked to be read to, infantile love-stories, by the hour. The heart had only just cracked, when the door creaked, and old Russett walked in—Marry Corry laughed gleefully. "Isn't she wonderful, doctor?" she cried. "I am quite proud to show you your greatest success!"

"I have more," answered Russett quietly. "Yes, my dear Mrs. Lomas, I always told you I should cure you. And we shall cure this naughty lady, too." He wisely made no allusion to her already so distant loss, but spoke on, prettily, encouragingly—all jam. "My son is working in Paris," he said. "He is very clever: I am very proud of my son." He always praised his son on principle to all outsiders—*aliquid haeret*.

And, also not without intention, he added: "His mother de-

clares he has lost his heart out there. Trust a mother to find out, eh? And Parisians have so much charm!"

Lucia gave such answers as unwilling but not uncivil bewilderment produces and fled.

Whilst the door was closing on the visitor, Mary Corry eagerly inquired: "She wasn't really ill, was she, doctor?"

Russett answered with an unwonted flash of gunpowder: "She was, and is, worse than you'll ever be." Then he calmed suddenly down. "At least, if you do what I say," he added, "otherwise you'll die."

But Lucia heard nothing of this. Already she was talking with the old gardener, Busk, in the garden. Busk had fallen on evil days: he was paid less—everything suffered from old Russett's love of money—and he had to work more. He had tried to get the patients cured by his kinsman the Exorciser, and the attempt had nearly cost him his place. The scientific accounts of her researches which Aunt Ermentrude faithfully sent him were his agony and his pride. "It's wonderful, ma'am," he complained, with gleaming eyes, to Lucia, "to think a woman should find it all out. And I'm proud, ma'am, to think she's, so to speak, in the family! But oh, ma'am, would to God it wasn't true!" He dragged Lucia through her own old hot-houses, grumbling the while that there should be so much suffering in the world, and in the special gardenia corner he halted.

"Now, when I cut you these 'jardinias,'" he fretted, "the temperature of the plant goes up five degrees. *She's* proved that: bless her! In her physiology."

"Don't cut them: they're no longer mine," pleaded Lucia.

He deigned no other response to this than to snap off three more. "A nice occupation is a gardener's," he moaned. "Sarah says, 'think of the fowls being killed!' And the sheep! But fowls aren't like flowers. Lord, what a world it is! Them's above must understand, for *we* can't. Weh-hell!"

Lucia, on returning, told her father it would be a long time before she again spent the afternoon at Beechlands. But she soon went back, for Mary Corry needed her.

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"I shouldn't trouble to bring any more bread for the old ducks," said Mary. "They none of them recognize you, not even Socrates."

"He is a philosopher," replied Lucia, casting her bread upon the waters.

CHAPTER XLIII

JACK RUSSETT, swept by a swift summons across the Channel, drew breath in his father's little private room at Beechlands. He looked round Dr. Russett's consulting the room in the splendid Beechlands sanatorium. He wondered what it had been formerly. Whose room? A grumpy old gardener outside was pruning some trellis-work. Perhaps the old servant she had desired them to retain? Jack opened the window and called to him! Whose room this had been? Mrs. Lomas's sitting-room. Ah!

He smiled scornfully to himself, at himself, as he closed the window. Was that the first question to consider, when reaching the house under such circumstances as these? He had never wanted to see Beechlands or have anything to do with the place, and his wise mother had advised Nathanael to let things work round. Then this great Paris discovery had come up: it was an understood thing, that Jack, on his return, was to take the management of the establishment. "After all, he was old enough, what the——" a few oaths from Gunpowder. The son admitted this, disgusted with himself for his fancies about the house Mrs. Lomas had sold.

So now he stood in what had been her boudoir. It was bare; old Russett affected, in things professional, clean whitewash, empty spaces, straight lines. Technical placards hung on the walls, and technical appliances stood about.

Last night late he had received a telegram: "Go immediately straight to Beechlands. Instructions there." And he had gone, not sorry to leave Paris for reasons that shall presently appear.

On the table lay a letter for him, addressed in his mother's handwriting.

"Your father is ill in bed," it said, "for the first time since I knew him. It's nothing serious, but he can't go to the Sanatorium, and to-morrow, he says, is an important day. It worried him so, that I telegraphed to you. You must take the management of everything. Ask Dosel and Sister Hilda. And come to us at night, or to-morrow morning, if you can't get away."

He looked round, a little dazed, pleased withal. The whole magnificent modern establishment lying waiting. In his quiet way, he rose to the situation, as he had done once before, when the sudden break came, with its call of responsibility, in his smooth, hard-working life. He sent for Dr. Dosel, the first resident physician. But before that he telephoned, from the writing-table getting his mother: "Nothing serious? A terrible sick headache? But he'd never had such a thing before—never had a day's illness—" and when Mrs. Nat confessed, badgered, in an angry squeak through the tube, that father had partaken too freely of an entirely new lobster cream "*à l' Américaine*," Jack laid down the instrument and confronted Dr. Dosel.

In the bedroom at home old Nathanael turned his face to the wall, letting all things go, as men do in a nerve-shattering break-down, especially if to them it be unknown of its kind; and what class more easily fluttered (with cause) than the medical? "It had to come," he said, speaking of his son's initiation; "all the better it should be sudden and complete!" And then he thought of nothing but his miserable headache, twisting like a corkscrew into one lobe of his great brain. He couldn't lift his head from the pillow; the whole room swam round. "Oh, shut out the daylight!" he said.

"It's gout," declared the little doctor from over the way, whom Isabella had surreptitiously consulted.

"He's a fool," proclaimed Nathanael; "and so are you with your lobster, my Poppet. I know well enough what it is. It's worry. I'm worried to death," said Nathanael. Plain N. Russett, M. D. and the other letters down to Z.

Son Russett, M. D., also M. A. (which his father of rougher beginnings was not) and M. R. (intently) C. P.—Son Russett sat intently facing Dr. Dosel with the list of the day's engagements between them. "How many patients are there at this moment?" he asked.

"Sixty-three paying patients," said Dr. Dosel, a little inoffensive man, like a rabbit in spectacles.

Jack looked up quickly. "Are there any others?" he inquired.

"N—no. But it sounds satisfactory. Your father always speaks of paying patients."

"Of course," said Jack. "Well, your list seems pretty full. The patients get plenty of treatment."

"They expect it for their money. And, besides, they get bored, —unless they're doing something. They never get cured by any amount of treatment."

"I suppose not." He turned to the book of cases. "What do you call unmedicinal pills?"

The first resident physician stared at the chief's son. "Why, pills without medicine," he said.

"I see. A great many of the patients seem to be taking those. Do they insist on having medicines for their money, too?"

"Medicines are extra," said the assistant, annoyed.

"Unmedicinal pills are very cheap, I suppose."

"No—no—no. Fairly."

Jack turned over several pages in silence. At last he said, "You do give lots of medicines."

"Not one that your father doesn't prescribe," replied Dosel quickly.

"But what is this formic acid I see everywhere?"

"Why, the essence of the ant,—it's a French specific: I wonder you didn't use it over there."

"Oh, I'd heard of it. I—I didn't think you used it. It's awfully expensive."

"It's a great favorite with the ladies. They like to think they'll carry weights a dozen times their size, like the ants."

Jack turned over more pages in silence. Then he took up

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the day list again. "What's this hygiene injection?" he began. "Everybody seems to get a hygienic injection. Here's Mrs. Corry has two daily."

The resident physician, who had risen, took a step or two about the room. Then he asked, "Do you really mean to say you don't know?"

"Of course I don't know, or why should I ask?"

"You must be laughing at me. You must know that subcutaneous injections are the rage for everything. They all want them. Take Mrs. Corry, for instance, who has nothing whatever the matter with her. So we give them *aqua distillata*—eh?"

"I see; I'm glad it's only that," said Jack.

"But not all, please. You see, a number get salt. It does wonders."

"I see," said Jack.

"In fact, it's the one thing in which your father has surpassed Vouvray. The hygienic injections are our specialty. We ascribe half our cures to them. Vouvray demanded abstinence from his patients—that's negative—giving up: we require something positive—pain—moderate pain—they have to *endure*! You can't think how it pleases them? The little prick—for their good. You remember the great '*pointes de jeu*' trick of twenty years ago. The same idea. That came to us from France!"

Jack frowned slightly, but he only remarked, "I suppose the injections can do no harm?"

"That's the worst of it; they are apt to produce abscesses, though I need hardly say we take every care."

"And those are so difficult to cure!"

"They *do* take time," admitted Dr. Dosel. "But the patients are very happy here. It's a beautiful home."

"It is," said Jack, gazing out at the leisurely old gardener. "Well, of course I shall make no changes. Why does my father say this is an important day?"

"On account of the operation, I suppose. But we have had a number."

"You have an operation? I am glad of that. I mean glad

I came in for it. I like operations. They *mean* something. What is it?"

"Oh, it's your father's pill-operation."

"My father's——?"

"Epiglottotomy."

"But that isn't a pill-operation?"

"Now really, Dr. Russett: you must forgive me. You can't expect me to know about what you know and what not!" Dr. Dosel spoke at last with high-toned vexation.

"You see, I've been so long away in Paris," said Jack humbly.

"You are aware that many people can't swallow pills. They simply can't to save their lives. And it frets them not to take the 'Hæmatoforce Pills,' when they see other patients benefiting by them. That's what we call the 'unmedicinals.' You can't give bread in powders. So Dr. Russett performs epiglottotomy. That is to say, he makes a slight incision—the very slightest, of course, but we have all the paraphernalia of a great operation, and when the antiseptic bandages are removed—well, *you* know the influence of that sort of thing—usually the patient swallows his first Hæmatoforce pill through a tube."

"And the charge for the operation is?"

"Thirty pounds."

"But when it doesn't succeed—for a number of people aren't amenable to suggestion——"

"Then the charge is thirty guineas, because of the damage to his reputation, says your father. It's failed so often of late: he fears he'll have to leave off."

"Yes. Well, I'm afraid I can't perform the operation. Can you?"

"Certainly: it's quite easy," said Dr. Dosel, smiling complacently.

"Are you satisfied with Sister Hilda?"

"From every point of view. We could not have a more excellent or capable head-nurse. Poor thing, it appears she has had a great disappointment. Ah, well, those people make the finest altruists. We learn in suffering what we teach in song."

Jack Russett remained face to face with this magnificent fact, and with others no less finely confused. He leaned his cheeks on his hands. "Is it tragedy or comedy?" he said aloud. He couldn't have told.

No, sanatoria were not in his style. Nor specialist "treatments" of chronic complaints. He thought of the ten thousand hard workers, honest workers, on hill and in dale, in hospital and slum, bravely fighting with small pay and much danger, the unconquerable foe, Disease. He had said to Mrs. Lomas that general practitioners were ignorant. Well, so they were. Better to be ignorant than to know too much. And what does the greatest therapist living know, after all? That quinine checks malaria (taught him by savages) and that iodide of potassium may cure scrofula. And that's about all.

He sighed heavily. "We can't help our ignorance," he said. And he thought of the wonderful operations he had seen under Brass. And also he thought of Luke Willes, and of Brass's great operation, which made his fame and his fortune, and which. "Nothing would induce me," says Brass, "to perform to-day."

Sister Hilda came to the door, a little timidly. She hoped young Dr. Russett was well? His father had cured Mrs. Lomas. It was quite like old times, too—oh? Yes, the under-doctor was waiting.

Jack straightened himself and, accompanied by a younger assistant, started on his round. It was a marvelous day to him, quite a new experience, the feeling, not a looker-on or executant in the hospital ward, but the responsible head of all this. He went right through the vast, solemnly silent building: silent but for the volubly complaining patient in every freshly opened cell. He saw Mary Corry, who insisted on talking to him about what she called the Mentone tragedy. He spent ten minutes trying to comfort a young creature lamentably severed from her husband and three little children, for months, by her medical adviser's orders taking hygienic injections and unmedicinal pills.

He returned to the private-room sick at heart, and filled in the

Case-book. He noticed, in writing, with mild surprise, that it was not a new book, in spite of the gilt lettering on it: Beechlands Sanatorium. He recognized his father's economy in small things.

"But he's so generous," he pleaded to himself, "about big."

And suddenly an irresistible longing seized him to search, possibly, for his father's opinion on Mrs. Lomas's case. He turned away, told himself he didn't want to: he went and stood by the window, gazed out at that interminable old gardener, who had come back after his dinner, who had lived with her, knew all about her, inevitably loved her. He went back and began swiftly turning the pages.

Here it was. Mrs. Lomas—the usual technicalities—his father's well-known estimate of functional disorder, opposed to the traditional teaching of the schools. His glance sank in haste to the prognostic, in Nathanael Russett's bold sprawl. Old Russett had two handwritings: the little prim one of objective science, the big, loose one of subjective sentiment. "*Incurable. No treatment any good. Will always have occasional periods of exhaustion and frequent crises of acute pain. Probably better as she grows older. Send her to Vouvray.*"

Jack Russett pushed the book away from him, so violently that it upset an inkstand on the nice new table. He did not observe the fact.

"*Incurable. Send her to Vouvray.*" He sat staring for ever so long, seeing nothing. Yes, seeing Peysonnax, seeing Mentone, the back room at Madame Burlubaux's—"Jeunesse"—and the bright new Beechlands Sanatorium.

"*No treatment any good. Send her to Vouvray.*"

He groaned aloud. And that startled him, vexed him: he had never done such a thing before. He remarked the inkstain and began to wipe it up. There was more blotting-paper in the book: he turned the pages to find it, relieved to get away from those staring words.

"*Incurable. No treatment any good. Send her to Vouvray.*"

"He'll explain," said Jack, trying to think it out, and clinging to his life-long enthusiasm for the old man, ill at home. The

greatest nerve-doctor of the century! "A Prince of the Art of Healing," the Students' address had called him. Jack remembered that the pater had laughed and said: "Art, good word!"

Bells were ringing. Probably that was for the Epiglottotomy. Jack roused himself to do a certain number of necessary things and answer inquiries. He was glad, not without anxiety, of anything that came to disturb him.

"Mr. Scragge to see Dr. Russett." What? That toad Scragge!

He received the man amiably. He felt that he wronged an inferior, for whom his father had nothing but praise.

"I thank you: I have hardly time to sit down," said Scragge, bending low, and fairly amiable also. "You see, there is this affair of Willes's to settle to-day."

He spoke attentively, watching, once for all, if the son knew anything of the father's business transactions, and how much. The expectant look in the son's eyes answered him.

"Dr. Russett can hardly have forgotten," he continued less cautiously, "that the old man Willes is to be turned out of his cottage to-day. Or, very likely he has forgotten: he has so many similar cases. And I look after them."

"And why is the old man Willes to be turned out of his cottage to-day?"

"Because he doesn't pay the interest on the mortgage, which is in Dr. Russett's hands."

"My father's?"

"Your father's. He bought it cheap, of some relative of Willes's who needed money."

Scragge knocked those splay feet of his together in the way which exasperates everybody, as he stood there, long, lean, bending forward, with watchful and lowering look.

"Why doesn't Willes pay? Can't he?"

"He says not. He has a long story about putting his wife into an Inebriate Asylum on the Topsy Method. He says that's ruined him, but we can't listen to their tales, or we'd never do any work at all."

"Well, you must wait with this work till my father's recovered."

"I can't, Dr. Russett, not without your father's orders. I daren't. I've never disobeyed him yet."

"But you've probably never had such a job as this."

"Dozens!" Scragge positively clashed his heels together. It was a clap of triumph, of vengeance for many a petty insult, the hit back, in the dark, of a life-long subservient bully. "Why, half the business I do for Dr. Russett is distraining for rent." The man might have the sharply humble look of a little green toad, he certainly also had its persistent shrill croak. "And your father has a special dislike to those miracles: he'll be glad to know them out of the way."

"You can stop, if I bid you?" said Jack.

The other deeply resented the last words. "Oh, certainly, if you've your father's instructions," he answered, resolved henceforth to hurt all he could.

He could do so easily, more than he knew. And more than *his* nature would have deemed possible.

"If my father has such a lot of houses, and other business, he must be very rich," said Jack thoughtfully.

"Richer than many a rich man," replied Scragge with a relish he couldn't keep back. "And there's no better investment than tenement houses in slums. And safe! Eight per cent. It's dirty work, but *I* do that."

"You should tell him it's dirty work," said Jack desperately.

Scragge chuckled, and looked straight at the smart, smartly dressed young gent, a most cruel look with a laugh in it.]

"Teach your grandmother to suck eggs," he said. "There's not a man in the kingdom knows better how to make a shilling out of sixpence or sticks closer to the shilling, when made. If I was to say to him——"

"What was Beechlands worth, when we bought it?" suddenly, violently interrupted Jack.

The agent grinned from ear to ear. "Nine thousand pounds, if a penny!" he said. "Now, *that* was a stroke of business for you! Not to speak of the bit beyond the road that'll be valuable building property in a year or two."

"Valuable building—nine thousand pounds!" repeated Jack.

"And paid for in Randjesvoorts! Ho! Ho!" shouted Scragge. "Do you know, I thought it was that had upset your father. Never known him ill before. But *he's* not the man to be caught napping. He's out of them, I hear."

"Be so good as to stop laughing and explain!" cried Jack, in a voice that sobered his tormentor. "You see, that I'm not in the know!"

"I suppose you're aware that Randjesvoorts are down to seven and a half," replied the other sullenly. "Your father had a lot, but it seemed he was in with the directors from the first, and he sold, when they were still fifty above par."

Jack Russett was white as the open page of the "Case-book." His eyes sought the torpid old gardener, languidly pruning in the darkening day.

"You are mistaken about some things," he said doggedly. "Of one thing you may be quite certain. The loss on these shares will be refunded in full, as far as the purchase-money of this place is concerned."

"You doubtless have your reasons for saying so," replied Scragge as he smiled himself out of the room.

Jack Russett sat down by the table again, heavily, and this time he sank his head quite down, flat, upon his arms.

CHAPTER XLIV

HE was so engrossed, not in thoughts—for what change could these now bring?—but in dull, overwhelming misery, that he did not remark familiar sounds which might otherwise have prepared him, especially not the soft glide of a motor, but, then, what motor in the country glides so softly as your own? When he lifted his head because the door opened, his father already stood before him.

“Tired, my boy?” cried Nathanael. “Well, I’ve rushed you into the whole thing at once—it was time! Henceforth it is you must boss the show! And a fine business you’ll find it. I started life on a crust! Look at me!”

“But I thought you were ill?”

“So I was, for the first time in my life—a regular smash. And who do you think set me up? That little general practitioner from over the way, Cupps. Gave me three grains of Aspirin, and the thing simply—went!” He waved his hand, smiling. “Simply went! To think it might have gone in the morning,” he added irritably, “if I’d known that Aspirin stopped a break-down like that!”

“Then you feel all right again? You can listen to me for a few minutes?”

“Of course I can listen. How odd you look. I wanted you back now that whole Pasis treatment has turned out a hoax.”

“It wasn’t a hoax, it was a mistake,” replied Jack quickly. “The after-effects——”

“I know, I know. You haven’t asked me to listen to your teaching, I presume?”

“No, father. But I want to talk about Randjesvoorts, while there’s time. Randjesvoorts have failed.”

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"Well, are you in them? I'm not," replied old Nathanael, opening scornful eyes.

"Probably Mrs. Lomas doesn't know yet. At any rate before she approaches us on the subject, we must refund."

"Oh, we must, must we?" sneered Russett, and sat down.

"Scragge is here: he can hasten at once to her father——"

"Of course he can. Hasten's a fine word. You sit down, you booby, and hold your tongue."

"You refuse, father?"

"I'm not angry with you: you amuse me. Everything amuses me to-day, and most of all that I didn't know Aspirin stopped such a pain as that! What humbug the whole art of medicine is, Jack. But you'll get on with the women here: they like good looks." He smiled and nodded complacently to his son.

"Father, I must beg and entreat of you to pay the full price for Beechlands."

"Son, I must beg of you to meddle with your own business, or I shall leave off being amused."

"Father, why did you send Mrs. Lomas to Vouvray?"

Russett leapt to his feet. "Oho!" he cried. "It seems this is an examination! I *have* left off being amused. Get to your work! I've lavished money on you. Go and earn some. When I was your age, I supported my mother!"

"I'm quite willing to work, sir, but not here. I can't manage this place. I don't understand about the epiglottotomy and—other things.

"Then what pray, do you want to do? You shan't touch another penny of mine."

"I don't know. I must see. I shall try to get a country-practice."

"A country-practice! Good Lord, the idiot!" Old Russett threw up his hands to heaven. "The hard work and the small pay of a country practitioner! The only son of Sir Nathanael Russett!" He turned, throwing out his ample chest. "Yes, Jack, it's bound to come within a twelvemonth. I have my information!" He strutted a few steps about the room. "I have my information!"

"Father," said Jack, "I've always tried to be a decent son——"

"That's what they say when they're going to misbehave. Oh, why isn't your mother here? She knows how to manage you."

"Well, you can't deny that I've always been decent: I don't want to leave off now. I—I—you're the pater, and always will be, but I'm no longer a child." He stared straight into his father's eyes. "I've seen this Paris fiasco—that's my final: I say: no more of that. I've seen this sanatorium—to-day's my first and last experience: I say: *never* that."

There was a long silence in the little darkening room, with its white walls and medical machines. Then the big man, the great man swelled to his full size, swelled beyond it—Jack awaited the explosion. It came.

"You've found me out, have you?" cried Nathanael with not unaccustomed oaths. "It's come; has it? I always knew it would. I'm a humbug, I am! I'm a fraud! The whole thing's a fraud. I defy you to make anything else of it! Whose fault is it—eh? the public's or ours? Can we send these ladies home? Can we tell people who clamor for a treatment that the only treatment in the world is common-sense? I'm a charlatan, I am! I'm a quack! a Cheap Jack! I'm a bird of prey: I fatten on the dying who fell by the wayside. Well, what then? You know now—do you?—what a humbug I am. You can call it out on the house-tops! Put it in the papers—eh!—a dozen times I've wanted to do it myself!" He loosened his cravat: he breathed heavily. There were great red marks on his face. But he went on speaking, as if he couldn't endure his own silence, and now his voice and manner had become suddenly mild: all the bluster and bellow seemed lost.

"Don't turn against your own father, Jack—'a house divided against itself,' you know. I'm glad we have had this talk at last: it's a weight off my mind. In future we can spread our cards on the table. Well, what do you intend to do?"

"Nothing," said the other, shaken to pieces. "Nothing but what I said before. But we must pay that money, father."

"I can't. It's not a question of paying—don't you see?—

but of confessing oneself guilty. Scragge'll say so. That man Monck'll say so. 'He'd never offer to pay up,' they'll say, 'if his conscience was clear!' D—— it, I won't pay a half-penny. Expose me!"

"Sir," said Jack, "it isn't my business to expose you. I haven't even the wish to judge you: far from it! But I can't help judging myself."

"You despise me?" said the father pitilessly, groping downwards. "Say it, for I see it in your face."

"A son doesn't despise his father," cried Jack passionately.

"Ah that's enough! He would but—he would if—Jack, I can't stand it. By G——, I can't. You're all I've got. You're all I care for. Jack, your being fond of me, and looking up to me, and—and admiring me, it's been the joy and pride of my life, Jack! I knew it couldn't last. I've told your mother so a hundred times. I wanted it to! I—I hoped to be hid away in my grave before you found cause to stand before me as you're standing now!" The wretched man sank into a chair and sat staring at his son's no less miserable face.

"For God's sake, let us pay these people the full price in money! And I will go and find work I can understand—somewhere else."

"What do you mean by somewhere else?" asked the father in broken tones.

"I think it had better be a good way off."

"You—you're running away from me! Out of reach of *my* work, out of hearing! Jack, you—you're thinking of some of the Colonies? My only son!" He hid his face in his shapely, jeweled hands; they trembled. Something very like a sob broke from the parched throat of the son.

Nathanael Russett looked up. "Jack," he said, "I surrender. I'll do anything to keep my son. Think of your mother, Jack. Don't despise me more than you can help, Jack! You've never been poor. I love money, but I love you more. Go to this man, Monck, if you like. And look here, Jack—stay with us—I'll, I'll give up this place to you to manage according to your ideas—you, you can make a charity of it, if you like—take non-paying

patients! Surgical, if you like! Or open air treatment of tuberculosis—that isn't humbug! Only, only don't despise me, Jack, more than you can help!"

"Oh, my God, father, don't say that again!"

The old man dragged his chair to the table—even in that moment he noticed with disfavor the broad splash of ink on it—he recklessly tore a blank page from the "Case-book," and scribbled, in hot haste, a couple of sentences across it. They were in his biggest, most feverish hand. "There," he said, pushing the paper forward. "Take it. I've put it in writing. I can't go back on it. Take the place! Alter it! Ruin yourself over it. I'll go on making money for both!"

Mechanically Jack pushed the paper into his pocket, but far from mechanically he clasped his father's hand.

"It'll look splendid, Jack, if we turn the place into a sort of semi-charity. Why, that ought to make a baronetcy out of my knighthood. By George, it will! Jack, Jack, be careful. Your mother says you lost your heart in Paris. I say you're in love with Mrs. Lomas, Jack. Why did I send her to Vouvray? I sent her to Vouvray, because we all do, it's the trick of the trade. We all send away to some other man—far-off—the people we don't know how to cure. Well, what of that? She isn't any the worse for it. You know as well as I do, she'll never be much better, and she'll never be much worse!"

"It—it——" Jack got no further. Even in the motor, hurrying to get hold of Monck before the evening papers came in, he tried not to finish his sentence to himself, yet all the while his heart was urging upon him the meaning of this "sending to Vouvray" in the life story of Lucia. *She* knew. He remembered too well the few broken words at Peysonnax, his indignant denial, his half-pitiful disdain. He felt like an accomplice, when he thought of her widowhood, her comparative poverty—he, "the greatest living specialist's" most broken-hearted son.

At the lodge-gates he stopped to inquire the way to Mrs. Lomas's—"the Mrs. Lomas who used to live here."

The words stuck in his throat, but the grim old gardener dragged

them forth. "And that ought to live here still," said Busk. "If things didn't all go wrong in this world. As they do."

"You won't find me contradicting you there," said Jack. "There's plenty of things I should wish very different."

"Humph, you're too young, sir, to know what I know," replied Busk, rather pleased. He consented, considering Jack's haste, to get upon the front seat of what he calls "the new sort o' donkey-shay with the donkey driving,"—but, then, he had called velocipedes, when they first came out: "donkey-shays where you're your own donkey." Busk is not a *laudator temporis acti*, but only an increasingly severe judge of his own evil day. However, he praised Mrs. Lomas with unceasing and accelerated speech during the brief trajet, telling of all the good she had done in the past and the good she was doing in the present, "for she'll do good where she is, all around her," said Busk, laying it on the more thickly, perhaps, so as to rile Dr. Russett's son. Anxious as he was to reach his destination, Jack Russett found the drive too short. He stood, almost before he was prepared, in the presence of Lucius Monck.

CHAPTER XLV

THERE is some mistake! I understood old Busk was anxious to see me?" said Lucius, half rising from beside his writing-table. The cat on it opened one disapproving eye.

"He cannot be more anxious than I am," replied Jack boldly.

Monck waited, icily. His features could not be considered reassuring, unless he wished them to be so.

"Mr. Monck, I have come—my father has sent me—I may as well state the object of my visit at once."

"Undoubtedly. If you are sure it is unavoidable?"

"Why, you don't even know what it is!"

"I do not, but it seems to me that any communication from your father to me should be made through my solicitors——"

"You are not encouraging, but you must let me finish the business which I originally began. I—I am afraid I made a mess of it. I returned from Paris to-day and had a consultation with my father. My father isn't satisfied with the arrangement about Beechlands."

"Does he think he has paid too much?"

Jack winced: there was a lamp on the writing-table, but fortunately the rest of the room was half-hidden in gloom.

"My father isn't a man of business." Jack spoke from habit, but, even as he spoke, he longed for the words to regain their ancient truth. "He and I have come to the conclusion that he was wrongly instructed in this matter."

"He and you? Pray, are *you* a man of business?"

"I am not. Had I been I should have made a different offer."

"More Randjesvoorts?"

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"Ah, I am too late. I'm sorry!"

"How so—too late?" For the first time a little human interest came into Monck's smooth tones.

"I have heard barely an hour ago that Randjesvoorts are down to nothing. So, of course, we refund those."

"Oh, of course," said Monck.

"You accept then my father's offer in the spirit in which it was made?"

"I receive it in the spirit in which it is made, and therefore I refuse it."

"I—I don't understand," stammered Jack.

"I admit that I wasn't quite clear. Pray note that it is you who compel me to be clearer." His tones changed from cold to hot: he turned in his chair. "After all this time, after all that has occurred, your father sends suddenly—sends you—to offer the proper price—oh, the fair price—for the property he has—acquired! For that course of action, sir, he can have but one of two reasons—either he is afraid of some scandal or—you wish him to do it!" He fought for breath. "Either reason is quite sufficient to explain my reply."

"Do let me assure you——"

But Lucius struggled desperately on. "Your father has got his bargain: he needn't be afraid. His knighthood is safe in our hands. Neither my daughter nor I are the sort of people who publish their wrongs. That paragraph in last week's *Truth* isn't ours: did you think it was?"—he stopped with a pitiful smile. "It's some other story, reads more like the tale of some poor tenant like Willes. Would you like to see *them*: they're in the kitchen?" He laid his hand gently on the cat's back. "Why don't you offer them a little of all that money?"—oh, the cruelty in his every intonation—"My daughter is putting them up for the night."

"I swear to you on my honor, they shall have their cottage back!"

"The oath is sufficient: does your father endorse it?"

"I will explain to him. You must let me explain!"—the cry might have moved a heart of stone. "They didn't pay the interest on their mortgage."

"Which he had acquired on purpose to oust them. I am sorry I know so much more than you about your father's affairs, Mr. Russett. You must excuse me: please notice I only refer to them in so far as they get mixed up with my own. As for Randjesvoorts, I didn't read the papers: I know no more about them than I have always guessed—that they are a fraud."

"A fraud!" cried Jack, bounding.

"Oh, I don't say that you guessed as much. And as for your sudden belated offer, I can only say that I prefer not to inquire what has caused it. That isn't necessary. My daughter and I accept no presents from Dr. Russett—or from you."

"Presents?—no, indeed. It is simply a case of miscomprehension——"

"Were it a case, sir, of misrepresentation, I should let it lie where it lies!"

"We have a right," cried Jack, "to pay our debts."

"What is a debt?" Lucius also raised his voice—it was shrill with too much effort. "Here for instance," he pointed to his letter-rack, "is a German gentleman who won money from me at cards and is constantly wanting to repay it. Do you call that a debt?"

"N—n—no," said Jack.

"Nor do I. And yet, do you know? I should very much like to find a plausible excuse for accepting some of that money. Odd, isn't it? While, as for your offer of—how many thousand pounds is it?—I would rather—— No, don't let's grow melodramatic! I am not very well, Mr. Russett: there can be no reason for prolonging this interview." He held on to the ledge of the writing-table, outwardly self-possessed: his heart was aflame. Was this man come here to bid for his daughter's good opinion, bidding thousands? He had grown reassured, after the swift torment of Paris, in the calm daily life here together of concordant duty and commensurate health: men quote the jealousy of an Othello: what is it compared with that of a father defending his daughter's heart?

"You wrong me most cruelly," said Jack. He was quiet, mastering his anger in his doctor's pity for so delicate-looking

an antagonist, and too miserable himself, in his sudden loss of a long idolized father, to resent vehemently Monck's deep sense of the wrongs of Lucia.

"Can't I speak to Mrs. Lomas from whom I bought the house?" he pleaded. "I can't go back like this. She will think—no,"—his voice changed—"I *won't* have her think, what she'll think when she hears about these mines. I have a right to explain——"

"Mrs. Lomas will think as I do that every word on the subject is an insult!"

"Let her tell me so herself, sir!" cried Jack. Lucius, following with his eyes the anxiously exultant turn in the other's speech, saw his daughter hesitating in the draped doorway, dimly lighted, behind the two sorrowfully quarreling men.

"Mrs. Lomas, won't you—can't you—tell your father, that I'm not a—not a swindler, though I may be a fool!"

She came forward at once. "Dear father, Mr. Russett has been the kindest of friends," she said. Lucius, looking from one to another, fighting for breath, tried to speak. His hand clutched the writing-table, a small bit of woodwork snapped. The cat opened one careless eye.

"Whatever you did in the matter," said Lucia extending her hand, "I feel sure was quite right and honorable. You couldn't do anything that was not."

"Thank you," said Jack.

"Lucia!" It was not so much the words she had uttered as the earnestness that thrilled through every one of them. The cry of the father sank beneath its own weight of love and abandonment, its fond hope for the future, its acceptance of inevitable fate. He would have said so much more to his daughter, but what could he say with that man standing watching them?—what could he say with this agony—the old agony—clutching him in the breast, at the throat? He fell back, his fingers idly fighting for air.

Jack Russett caught him as he fell. "I know what to do," said Jack. "May I?"—already he was loosening the sick man's cravat. "Would you send for his servant? I suppose he has had

this before?" Lucia, unable to do more than he, or to do it so well, watched the deft movements that seem so easy and that so few ever learn. In her memory awoke the scent of violets and a picture of two simpering figures against a sunlit wall.

The young man came back to her, after Lucius had sunk to rest in bed. "There is nothing more to be done for the present," he said: she could not but notice, with a sudden heart-sinking, the exceeding gravity of his manner. "I think if you wouldn't mind, I should like to stay on a bit."

"We cannot ask that of you: we must send for Dr. Rook."

"Oh, I know he doesn't like me, but I may as well wait for Dr. Rook."

"You think he is very ill! But he's had these attacks before. You daren't leave him alone?"

"He musn't have another—soon."

"You would not say that to me, unless you expected it to return at any moment and—and—oh, ward it off in time!" she cried passionately.

"I can't. We don't know how. Oh, Mrs. Lomas, we can do so little!"

"You do all you can," she said, touched by his despair.

"All that—that great success I begged you to try in Paris, the splendid thing that was going to make you quite strong and well again, I hoped and trusted,—it has turned out a failure. I have been wanting so much to tell you. The treatment was a complete triumph of modern science, but the patients developed a painful disease."

"I do not say I am glad," she answered softly. "Far, far from that. But I do feel this: we need not all be quite strong and well in this world. And even though the doctors cannot make us that, they may do their daily work as we." She lifted her eyes to his face. "Help him!" she said.

He sought for kind words of vain reply. And suddenly she told, in hurried sentences of the Eastern Hakim's drug. "It is recovery for him or swift death," she concluded. "And we don't know which."

THE NEW RELIGION

"Did you say he hadn't had these attacks for some time?"

"Not since our cruise. He gave up smoking. We live so quietly."

"And so I am to blame!"

She looked at him sadly. "Don't say that! I might as well say it was I"—and he fancied, in the dim light, that her color deepened painfully.

Without answering he turned back to the sick-room, glad of an escape. From the medical point of view, as she had rightly read in his manner, it was best she should be prepared. The heart was barely working: a second attack could not be far off and must have but one issue. As far as European science went, Lucius Monck lay dying.

"He was worse than this on the yacht, sir," said Luke Willes, at the doctor's elbow. Luke Willes dismissed by Mrs. Corry for an hundred faults and one, but quite happy again in his former service.

"Tell me about it," said Jack. And he questioned the "valley" carefully. "So you saw this marvelous effect of the powder," he said in conclusion. "But surely *you* ascribed it to—I speak in all reverence—prayer?"

Luke Willes jerked himself about most uncomfortably before replying. "I did the first time," he brought out at last, "but I couldn't the second. Because it was just as good, master said, and I was sick in my cabin. I didn't know anything about it."

"I see."

"And master ain't a praying man," added Luke regretfully.

Russett dismissed him with an earnest injunction to Mrs. Lomas to lie down and not to come till sent for. Having done this the doctor went forward, to the bed. The sick man seemed hardly conscious. The room was very dimly lighted.

"He always carries them about with him," repeated Jack to himself. From a chair by the bedside he took up a waistcoat and drew out of its pocket the little Oriental case.

He laid it in the palm of his hand. His gaze rested on the dog, Rob, who had come wandering in and had sunk down heavily by

the bed. He thought of the usual experiments in the hospitals, a dozen dogs a day!

What of this drug that lay on the palm of his hand? He did not greatly dread its poisonous possibilities: alternately, its healing influence had been proved. That influence was presumably "suggestive," yet who shall say? The East is full of its own secrets, for body and soul. There was that curious case the other day in the *Lancet*, of the Brahmin of Poona—the Indian Government had vainly offered him ten thousand rupees for his "cure." Jack Russett, at least humble in his ignorance, shook his head. Of one thing he could be practically certain. The temporarily spent spasm would return in an hour or two, and that, as he had so frequently seen in hospital, would be the end.

Opportunity for analysis there was none, nor time for much deliberation. Men—especially young men—do not seek deliberation when they foresee that to decide "whether" will mean to decide "not." Such leaps are taken without poisoning for the spring.

Jack Russett had seen brave deeds done in the cause of science or the cause of healing, deeds at thought of which the heart beats high. He had seen blood drawn from the healthy for those dying with loss of it: he had seen the skin of the uninjured sacrificed to save the life of the burnt. He had been in Vienna, when Loffelt died the martyr of his great discovery: with a smile, even at this moment, he remembered the brave docteur Burlubaux.

Very quietly he tore a leaf from his pocket-book and wrote across it, "The drug is fatal." He laid it well under the feeble light on the table, where Luke must see it, when he came back, as ordered, in half an hour's time. Then, as quietly he moved an ottoman within touch of the bell-handle and, stretching himself upon it, in the heavy shadow, he swallowed a portion of the coarse, saltish-tasting sand.

Almost instantly a deepening drowsiness fell upon him as if life were ebbing away. Well, he fought against the feeling, but not desperately: he would not have thought it possible, twenty-four hours ago, that a man could suffer what he had suffered, could lose what he had lost, that day. If he died, there would be a

doctor less in the world. If he lived, he would be the means of saving Lucia's father. Nor did he believe in his inmost heart that the Moslem would have ventured to give a poison to an Englishman. Doubtless both satchels had contained the mysterious drug. He expected to live: he would live to analyse the powder: he would not rest till he got to the truth of it; he would work wonders with it. Meanwhile Monck should see—whether he lived or died—that he was in earnest! Lucia should know——

A smothered cry aroused him. He did not know how long he had lain there. But he awoke to see Lucia leaning against the table, his paper in his hand, by the lamp.

"I'm all right," he stuttered, hastily collecting his words. "Oh, I say, this is too bad! Didn't Luke tell you? I only put that there, in case Luke——"

"There's a powder missing," she said in a hoarse voice, scattering some two dozen on the table-cloth, "I've counted them often. You—you've taken one."

"I'm all right, as fit as can be." He put his hand across his forehead. "Only a little drowsy. I've had a tiring day!" "Lucia!" came in an insistent whisper from the bed. "Listen. Bend closer!" She put her ear to his lips. "The powders! Take away! The Maltese wrote last Christmas. They are deadliest poison—kill—immediately. I kept them by me for—in case the pain—Coward! Take away!" The sick man fell back. "Take away!"

"Yes, father," said Lucia. She had strength to say that. It seemed to her as if some one else were speaking. She had strength, in the flash of an eye—how long it seemed!—to fling herself across the banisters: she was crying out, with a low swift cry that carried, to Luke Willes—oh Luke! Luke!—for antidotes—the first she could think of—restoratives——

She would have fallen, had Russett not pleaded with her, gently drawing her into the adjoining room.

"You must counteract at once! You know what is needed. Ring! Tell him to get it!" she cried, with the great sobs pouring up in her voice. "Oh, the folly! the wickedness! Oh, you brave

man!" She struggled to calm herself. "No," she said, "just a doctor—a doctor—laying down his life——"

"I never heard, never hoped to hear, such sweet words as those from your lips," he stammered, "and I shouldn't mind paying the price——"

"No, no, no!" she burst out passionately. "Oh, if Dr. Rook would only come! What must I *do*? What can I get? Tell me! Here is Luke! Hush! Put them down, Luke. What more do you need?"

"This is quite sufficient," said Russett, glancing over the jugs on the tray. She had sank down on a couch; he saw that she was praying. He drew diffidently nearer.

"Is there anything more I can get, sir?" asked Luke by the door.

"Yes," said Jack in a clear voice, "some fresh water for the powder we are going to give Mr. Monck."

Lucia started up, staring at him, in her white agony, with eyes distraught.

"Yes," he said. "This Moslem, in his hate of the Christian, has tricked you"—and suddenly he was down on some low seat or cushion beside the couch. "If it was a poison, so much the better for me!" he cried. "Then at least people'd believe I wasn't a swindler and a blackguard! *I* swindle you? *I* lie to you! Why, I love you! Look here now, if it's poison, so much the better, after this! I came here to say I wouldn't swindle you—instead of that, I'm saying that I love you—the one thing I intended never to say. Why, I must be half-dead, or half-dazed, to say that to you! To tell you, you've always been a memory to me of all I thought no woman could ever be to any man! And in Paris I realized that it wasn't all admiration—but love! Such a duffer as I—a burglar and a swindler—love!"

"Oh, no, no, no," she faltered.

"But it is," he said, "love! And so, as it's poison, and I'm going to die anyway," he laughed recklessly. "I've told you. It's love! love! love! But I'm not going to die; I'm going to live, and so's your father! I can feel my brain clearing and my pulse steadying. No poison could feel like that, or have that effect.

I'm coming back deliciously to life—not deliciously, miserably." All the momentary triumph had dropped out of his accents. He spoke gently. "But before I go back to my patient, you must say that you forgive me."

"Oh, hush!"

"Have I offended you too deeply? I didn't know I was saying it. I hadn't the slightest intention of saying it, but I'm not sorry I said it, for God knows it is true."

"How could I be offended? I owe you my father's life, if—if — And your own life—oh, don't say it's possible: I couldn't bear it. Tell me for certain—you are going to live—to live! Say it! Say it is true! For my sake! Say! Say you are going to live!"

"I am going to live! What I have swallowed was no poison!" began Jack vehemently. He checked himself. "Ah, thank you, Luke: I will take it in at once to Mr. Monck." He thrust one finger into a waistcoat-pocket for the powder he had put there; instead, he drew out the paper his father had pushed into his hand, not more than an hour ago—the cession of Beechlands. He spread it out, all crumpled, in front of Lucia, under the lamp. And he looked into her eyes, into her eyes—deep, deep down—deeper still—into her eyes.

"Not for gain," he said with his hand upon the paper. "Not for vain-glory. But to succor the sick."

(1)

THE END

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